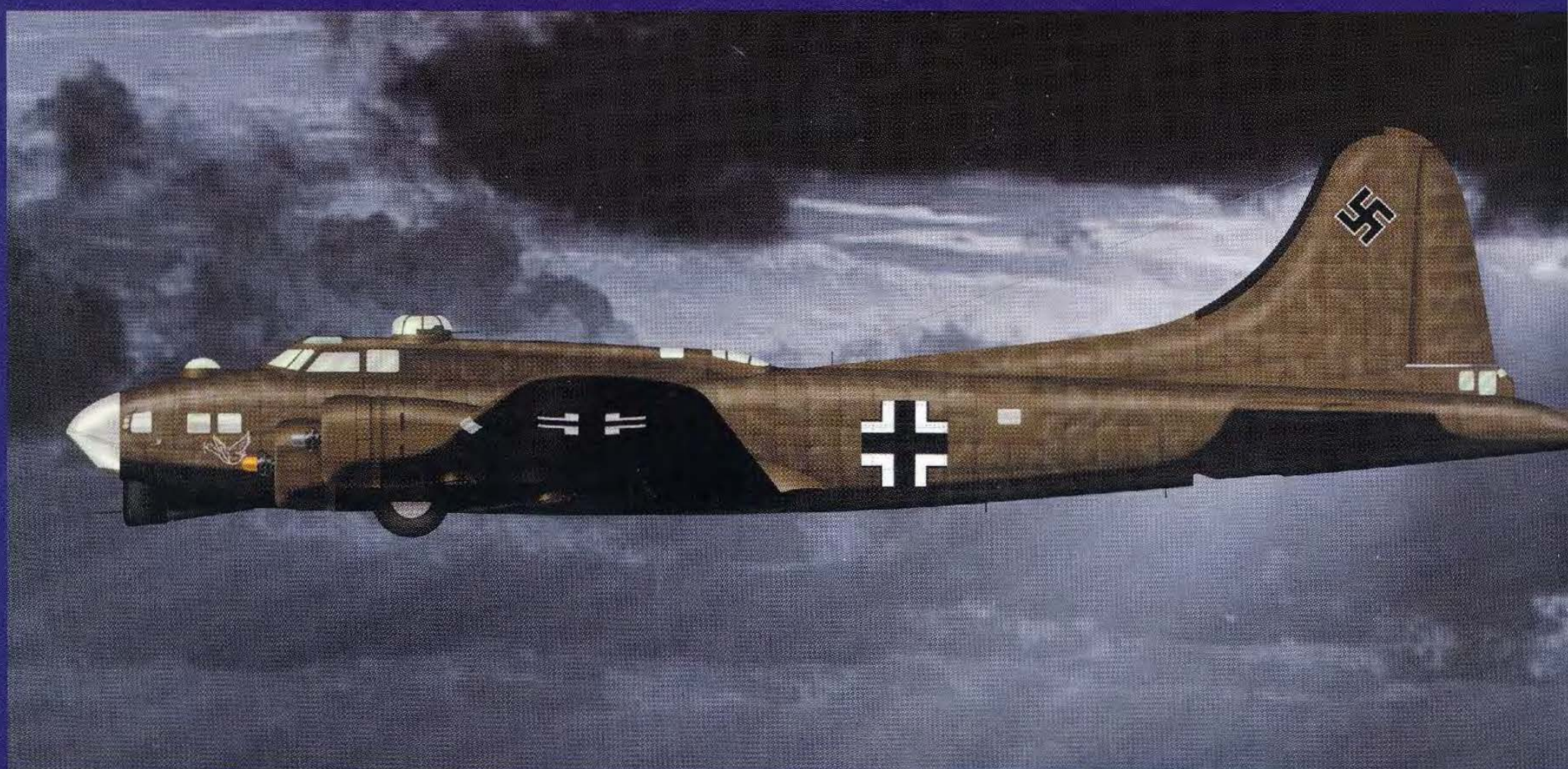


# KG 200

THE LUFTWAFFE'S MOST SECRET UNIT



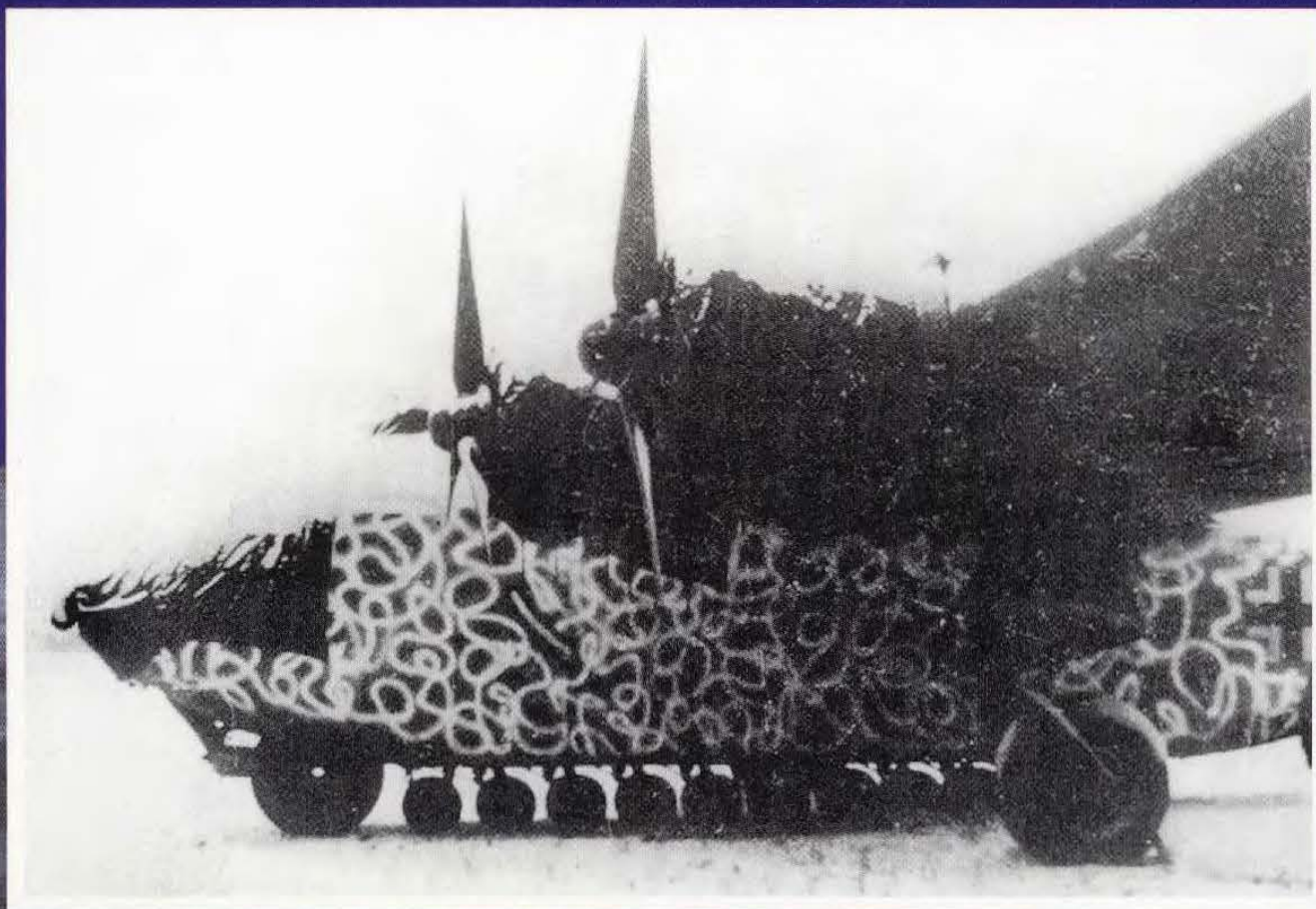
GEOFFREY J. THOMAS

&

BARRY KETLEY







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**G**eoffrey J. Thomas was born and raised in Lancashire. As a student in Surrey, he joined the Home Guard, and entering the Army, he served in a Field Company RE before being posted to India and later to Malaya Command. It was in Malaya that he began his interest in the colours and markings of aircraft deployed in the region, particularly those used by the British services. On his return to the UK, he qualified as an architect and lived with his wife in Surrey in the south of England.

His continuing study of the history of Allied air operations in the Far East eventually led to his acclaimed book *Eyes for the Phoenix: Allied Aerial Photo-Reconnaissance Operations – South-East Asia 1941-1945* published by Hikoki Publications in 1999.

Another interest was the captured Allied aircraft used by KG 200 and this book is the result of detailed research over several years on the part of the author. Sadly, Geoffrey Thomas died before this book was published.

**B**arry Ketley is a recognised authority on historic military aviation. His fascination with things aeronautical began at the age of five when for two minutes he sat in the cockpit of a RAuxAF Vampire at a Battle of Britain Open Day at Leconfield. Quite by chance Messers Airfix and Humbrol began producing their complementary wares shortly thereafter. Training as an industrial designer encouraged his interest in aircraft. Military aircraft and units, however, do not exist in isolation, they also represent 'politics by other means', to be used or misused by their political masters. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the Third Reich and no unit was more prey to such pressures than KG 200. This subject became a shared interest with Geoff Thomas following whose untimely death, was developed from an unfinished manuscript into this book.

Barry Ketley is author and co-author of several reference works including *Aufklärer: Luftwaffe Reconnaissance Aircraft and Units 1935-1945*, *French Aces of World War 2*, *Luftwaffe Emblems 1939-1945* and *Luftwaffe Fledglings 1935-1945 – Luftwaffe Training Units and their Aircraft*.



**S**hrouded in secrecy and intrigue during its lifetime, and myth and legend since its dissolution, Kampfgeschwader 200 still remains for many one of the most fascinating units of the Luftwaffe. Delivering spies while flying captured Allied aircraft, conducting clandestine reconnaissance missions over land and sea far from the Reich, testing new weapons such as the 'Mistel' composite bomber and the piloted V-1, and undertaking extremely long-range liaison flights – often over enemy or neutral territory – were just some of the unit's tasks. But there was also a more sinister aspect to its operations: men from KG 200 played a significant part in the notorious action against the French Resistance on the Vercors plateau in 1944, while others were involved in what were effectively suicide missions. Accompanied by many rare photographs, Geoff Thomas' deeply researched text throws new light on all aspects of this enigmatic unit, dispels a number of myths and shows that despite its 'special' status, KG 200 was, in reality, just as much a prey to the Nazi hierarchy's power politics as every other branch of the Wehrmacht, with results that were often dramatic or tragic, but frequently farcical.



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# KG 200

THE LUFTWAFFE'S MOST SECRET UNIT



GEOFFREY J. THOMAS

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BARRY KETLEY





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*Caption to title page: A rare in-flight view of one of KG 200's captured Boeing Fortresses, in this case the very first of its type to be used by the Luftwaffe. This is B-17F-27-BO 41-24585 Wulfe Hound which went missing on 12 December 1942. Here it is in 1943 being demonstrated to Luftwaffe fighter pilots to show them the best means of attacking the 'Dicke Autos'*



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***Dedication***

*For my dear Maureen, who cared for me during  
the dark days and gave me all her loving care*



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# EDITOR'S FOREWORD

Sadly, Geoff Thomas did not live to see this book in its finished state. He was seriously ill when he presented the draft manuscript and as a consequence the writer has had to edit the text without the benefit of Geoff's guiding hand. In the course of discussions with numerous friends and contacts — in particular Friedemann Schell and Sven Carlsen in Germany, who undertook to review the text from the German viewpoint — a number of significant additions and corrections have been made. With their help and a good deal of additional documentary evidence which was unavailable to Geoff, I have been able to cross-check and correlate the details of a number of operations and aircraft. I have been helped greatly by information from Rick Chapman and Axel Urbanke, also in Germany, who very kindly allowed me to use their article on the last desperate operations by the maritime Staffel. Nor must we forget Eduard (Ted) Winkler's invaluable assistance in deciphering and translating the old Sutterlin script in some of the KG 200 logbooks, which also revealed the names of some of the more obscure operations undertaken by the unit. Additional information concerning the little-known weather reconnaissance units linked to KG 200 was kindly supplied by Franz Selinger.

By its very nature, the story of KG 200 and its antecedent units is intimately linked with the German Intelligence Services and political intrigue at the highest levels.

Consequently, it has been necessary to study this aspect of often confused and complex German history in some detail in order to place the purpose and functions of the unit's operations in context. While the book you have in your hands is probably the most comprehensive study of KG 200 in English to date, it should be remembered that it is also a book about subterfuge, intelligence gathering and a war in the shadows; consequently it could not be the final word as so much of the historical material concerning the unit has been lost, destroyed (by accident or otherwise) or simply never recorded in writing in the first place. The editor would therefore be, as Geoff would surely have wished, pleased to hear directly from anyone who has *documentary* evidence of the units, personnel, equipment and activities of KG 200. To quote Rudyard Kipling:

"I keep six honest serving men  
(They taught me all I knew)  
Their names are What and Why and When  
And How and Where and Who."

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2: Long before he was involved with KG 200, Hptm Werner Baumbach receives the Oakleaves to the Knights' Cross from his Führer in mid-1941 while he was serving with KG 30. This followed an attack on Allied shipping which was related in considerable detail in the August 1941 issue of *Der Adler* magazine. Baumbach was already a highly experienced combat pilot, as shown by the Narvik shield on his arm





# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The origins of this history lie in a series of articles written for a now defunct modelling magazine and published between 1987-1989 describing the development and colours of the Boeing B-17. I found a number of these aircraft had been captured and were used by the Luftwaffe for clandestine operations by a 'Geheim Geschwader', a secret formation, called Kampfgeschwader 200. Soon afterwards, Hans-Heiri Stapfer produced a book about these and other captured aircraft.

Several other writers had discovered basic information about KG 200 in Air Ministry Directorate of Intelligence Reports, for the organisation still appeared to be shrouded in mystery. John Clive wrote two clever novels, *KG 200* and *Broken Wings*, but it soon became clear that the use of the B-17s for these 'special purposes' was but a small part of the activities of KG 200 as became clear from reports of *Oberst* Randel-Semper, *Ia-Off* (Operations Officer) of the Geschwader.

Despite changes that were made in the numbering of its subordinate units, the I.Gruppe of KG 200 remained from beginning to end the agency for delivering and, on occasion, picking up agents in enemy territory. The Staffeln and the other Gruppen, however, nominally intended for training and 'special duties', often incorporated units or were detached and re-formed and re-numbered during the last year of hostilities. As far as possible, I hope to have avoided boring the reader with the changes that took place and I must apologise if I do not make the situation always clear.

Recollections by survivors are few and of little value. The post-war writings of Albert Speer are generally untrustworthy, and interrogation reports of prisoners contain little of interest - what there is is often fictional - as POWs were advised to tell interrogators what they wanted to hear. Although Werner Baumbach must have been interrogated intensively by British Intelligence after the war, no record is available at the Public Record Office, and yet any political embarrassment that might have been caused by the release of such documents must surely no longer exist. Otto Skorzeny had little to say about close co-operation with KG 200, but interviews with Hannah Reitsch gave some insight into plans for the Totaleinsatz and into the final days of the 'Führerbunker' in Berlin. The names of these and many other people of power and influence in Nazi Germany occur again and again in the story of KG 200 as do many others. The most reliable, although limited, account of the Geschwader is Peter Stahl's *KG 200: The True Story*, but he can be relied upon only when writing of his own experience as Staffelführer of Kommando Olga. Much of the rest of his book appears based on second-hand accounts, hearsay and extracts from archives.

During the thirty years following the Second World War a number of aviation historians and enthusiasts, many better qualified than the author, wrote brief or partial histories of KG 200. Most, it seems, were deterred by the

difficulties of obtaining a sufficient range of information to allow them to make a balanced story, dealing with the wide range of activities undertaken by the Geschwader. Even after the re-unification of Germany and the virtual end of the Communist system in the East, little more was to be found, nor does it seem likely that much further information will be discovered, despite the efforts in Germany of several enthusiastic researchers.

Many of the photographs contained in this book have been given to me over a period of several years by other aviation enthusiasts and well-wishers. In most cases they were 'second-hand' already when I received them and I am quite unable to record their provenance. If any of my readers recognise 'their' photographs, I would ask them to accept my sincere thanks.

Air Ministry Interrogation Reports provided some personal details but the people close to KG 200 activities gave little of interest, apart from Flugkapitan Hanna Reitsch's memories of events in the Berlin Führerbunker. Otto Skorzeny claimed credit for consideration by the Oberkommando der Wehrmacht and by the SS of the 'Totaleinsatz' (total commitment), although Reitsch paid little heed to his efforts, taking almost all the credit upon herself. Skorzeny's advice was sought on a variety of operations and schemes, so it is unlikely that he was not fully consulted in this instance.

Albert Speer, the young architect whose grandiose schemes for building and planning in the Third Reich caught Hitler's attention, gave away very little about the political manoeuvring in which he was deviously involved at the end of the war. Hitler was so impressed by his imagination and undoubted organising ability that Speer was appointed Minister for Munitions and Production, yet persuaded the post-war War Crimes Court that he was unaware of the horrors of slave labour in his factories.

Werner Baumbach, an experienced and highly-regarded bomber commander, was involved in Speer's political games, using the authority he had from Speer to obtain fuel and the means of moving aircraft and their crews. He was also able to act as Speer's mouthpiece when dealing with senior officers, to obtain their co-operation.

I must express my thanks especially to my good friend and historian Dr Gunther Gellermann for permission to use the results of his researches into KG 200 and participants in the actions of the Geschwader, many of whom are now deceased.

He has confirmed that there are no complete records of KG 200 operations, adding, "The Military Archives in Freiburg offer nothing". Those documents that remain have been located in many files and it has been impossible to find related material without extensive searches, many of which would undoubtedly have proved fruitless.

Gunther has told how, at the end of the war, elements of the Staff of KG 200 were transferred to Southern Germany. As American forces approached, at Lauenhain



Castle near Ludwigsstadt, Major Gunter Hurlin (recently having commanded the II. Gruppe of the Geschwader) burned all his records in the presence of witnesses, namely the unit's meteorological officer and his secretary.

Dr Gellermann has produced a large body of information from research, which he has made fully available for me to use. He even achieved interviews with some of the participants in the story during their later years, including Artur Axman, Hans Baur (still a devotee of Hitler) and Friedrich Schäfer RK, and has obtained further information from the log-books of aircrew, all of which have helped to fill in detail. My sincere thanks must go also to my friend, Joseph La Picirella, Légion d'Honneur, CdeG, MM, who spent many years setting up a Musée de la Résistance du Vercors in memory of the French civilians and Resistance fighters who died at the hands of the Germans and their followers in mid-1944. His large collection is now in the safe-keeping of the Conseil-General du Département. I have been pleased to carry out some research on his behalf, the results being included in Jo's book *Temoignages sur le Vercors* (15 or more editions) which has been described as the 'most plagiarised book in France'. It is certainly the most reliable book to have been written about the Unternehmen Vercors.

My gratitude also to those enthusiasts with interests in particular fields of research.

In the USA: Jim Kitchens for obtaining 'official' documents and giving of his knowledge of Luftwaffe units; Dana Bell, acknowledged expert on aircraft camouflage and markings; Larry de Zeng, international law.

In France: Remi Beaudru for his knowledge of the Geschwader Bongart, and Jean-Claude Mathevet, glider operations and recent on-the-spot research.

In England: Tom Willis, expertise concerning aircraft captured by the Luftwaffe; Alfred Price, details of the Mistel aircraft and their proposed operations; Nick Beale, the story of Sondervverband Einhorn is based on his research which first appeared in Luftwaffe Circle Special Publication No.7 (Auburn, AI) in November 1994; Eddie

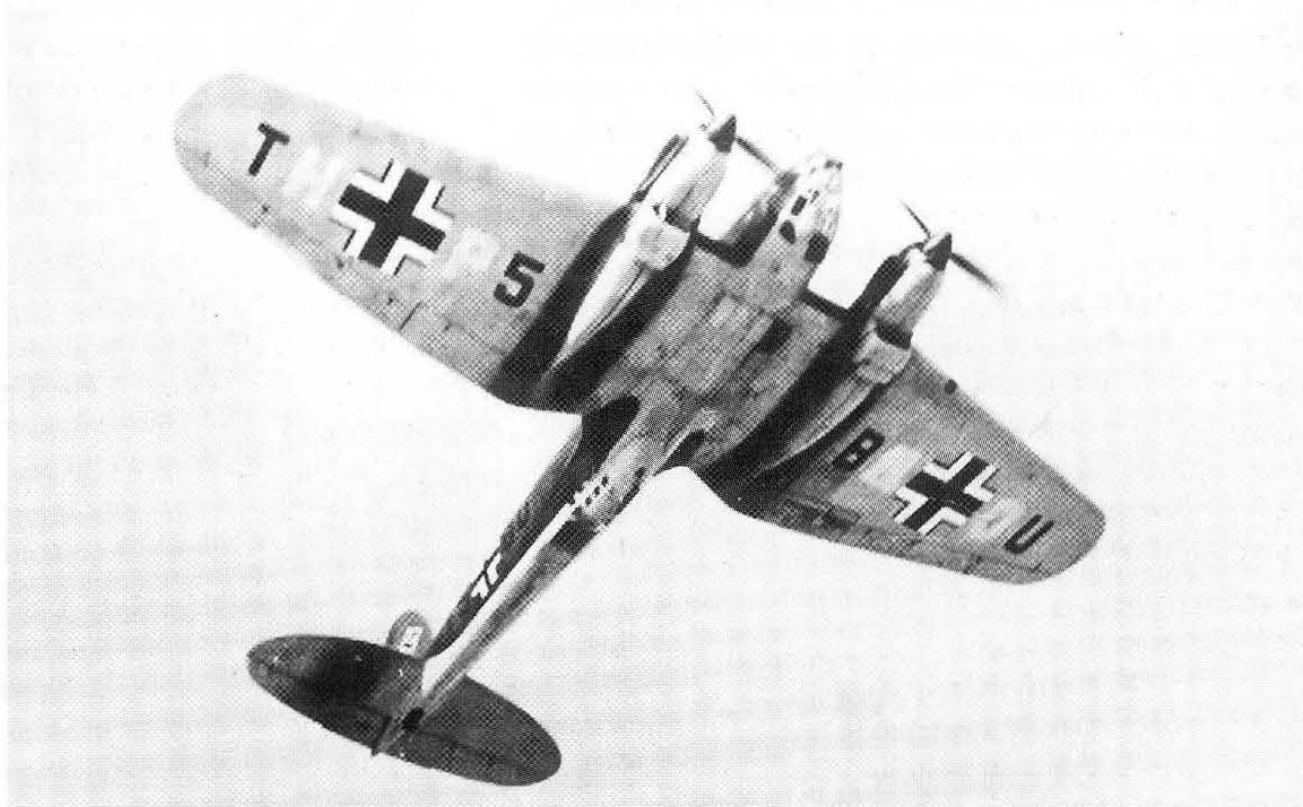
Creek, Barry Ketley and Dick Ward, the use of photos from their collections.

Just in case it seems that all the material in the book is 'second-hand', I must assure the reader that I have found gems in the Library at the Imperial War Museum and, like other researchers, have spent many fruitless hours at the Public Record Office. I believe this is the first time that anyone has attempted to draw together all the strands of the KG 200 story, albeit destroying the 'mystery' that so long surrounded the organisation and its personnel who attempted, often too late, to put into operation schemes of ingenuity and sometimes of foolishness.

A word of caution: Readers seeking information from the Internet should be aware that much is derived from a few unreliable documents, stating, for instance, as fact long-distance flights by Junkers aircraft of FAGr 5, based on the most flimsy evidence.

I must also record my thanks to Geoff Amey who has typed out my text, with great patience, accommodating continual revisions and changes of mind.

**3:** *An Heinkel He 111H, T5+BU, of Wekusta 1./Ob.d.L. The washable delivery code, HP+MO, has been removed leaving clean areas. Hardly mentioned in accounts of operations, weather reconnaissance was a vital part of strategic and tactical planning in the Wehrmacht*







## INTRODUCTION

In no doubt that the countries of Europe would soon be at war, in 1938 the Commander-in Chief of the German Army, *Generaloberst* Freiherr von Fritsch wrote: "The military organisation that has the best photographic intelligence will win the next war."

Before the outbreak of the Second World War the Germans, unlike the British, put considerable thought and effort into the creation of an aerial intelligence-gathering organisation. The Oberkommando der Luftwaffe — OKL (Air Force High Command) already had a very clear appreciation of the importance of reconnaissance in a continental war, based on lessons learnt from the Great War of 1914-1918. From the first weeks of that war, the armies and navies of the major adversaries employed aeroplanes and some airships primarily for 'scouting' or reconnaissance. Manoeuvrable aeroplanes known variously as 'jäger', 'chasseur' or 'fighters' were soon developed to destroy the enemy's observation aircraft which were mostly two-man machines designed to provide a stable platform for artillery observation and photography.

On 9 November 1918, with his country suffering starvation by the Allied blockade, his Army in retreat, and facing a Marxist revolution, Kaiser Wilhelm II abdicated and fled to Holland, leaving Germany in the hands of a republican socialist government, and the veteran soldier Paul von Hindenburg in power as President. The Armistice of 11 November brought provisional peace to Europe, a peace to be confirmed in June 1920 when Germany's Weimar Government accepted the terms of the Treaty of Versailles.

The Treaty forbade the addition of any air formations to Germany's permitted residual defence force, the Reichswehr. The Defence Ministry nevertheless planned a future development of military aviation even though the Allies placed restrictions on the permitted performance of any aircraft which might be built by the greatly depleted aviation industry.

While the Weimar Government attempted to deal with disputes with the French about reparations and with Poland about the frontier with that country, the small German military Staffs envisaged future war against each of these countries, particularly in 1928 when Germany's inability to maintain reparations payments led to a French occupation of Germany's industrial heartland, the Ruhr. Many Germans, the military included, regarded the defeat of 1918 as due to the ineptitude of politicians, rather than to military failure, and sought a renewal of Germany's standing as one of the major powers of Europe.

A Trade Agreement was concluded with the Soviet Union in 1928. This waived the Soviets' rights to reparations in exchange for access to German engineering technology. As a secret part of the Agreement, a military fly-

**4 Above:** A posed but interesting picture of a crewmember of an Heinkel He 111H (possibly of KG 53) handing over a film cassette to a waiting despatch rider. Speed was essential in processing tactical photo-reconnaissance pictures, a situation less typical of the work of the Aufkl.Gr.Ob.d.L. which was much more involved with long-range strategic reconnaissance linked to operational planning by the higher staffs of the Wehrmacht. The motorbike is a Zundapp KS 600



ing school was set up at Lipetsk near Voronezh in Russia, where training was begun of Reichswehr aviators who had received elementary schooling at German civil flying clubs. The Lipetsk airfield and its technical facilities were presented to the outside world as belonging to the Soviet Air Force, but the school was entirely directed towards the development of a new German force. Secretly-designed aircraft built in Germany were flown there for test and evaluation from 1931 onwards, but by the end of the following year the technical work had been cut back, most of the testing secretly taking place at Rechlin, although the German Parliament, the Reichstag, was hesitant to allow a build-up of military aviation.

In 1920 Adolf Hitler became effective head of the small *Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* (German Workers' Party), setting out its policy as the achievement of a union of all the German-speaking peoples of Europe in a 'Greater Germany'; formation of a 'Third Reich' and abrogation of the Versailles Treaty. Hitler's aims echoed a popular resentment of the Weimar Government's continuing adherence to the Treaty. By 1930, continuing economic instability and open conflict between German Communists, Socialists and opponents of the renamed *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* (National-Socialist German Workers Party i.e. the Nazis) had made him its undisputed leader. Matters came to a head early in 1933 when the Nazis came to power on a tide of popular feeling, promising to restore Germany to its "rightful" leading position in Europe. In January 1933 Hitler was appointed Reichs Chancellor by the ageing President Hindenburg.

After the burning of the Reichstag building, claimed to be the work of an alleged Communist, on 27 February 1933, Hitler engineered the passing of an 'enabling act' by the Reichstag, virtually ending all political opposition. When Hindenburg died in August, Hitler had achieved total personal power. The Third Reich had begun.

Already being wound down by 1933, the ending of all military association with the Soviet Union was soon ordered by Hitler but by then a force of well-trained flying and ground personnel was back in Germany ready to form the nucleus of a future air force. Hitler's lieutenant, Hermann Göring, a fighter ace of the Great War, was appointed Reichskommissar für die Luftfahrt (State Commissioner for Aviation), then Reichsminister to head the new Reichsluftfahrtministerium (RLM — Air Ministry).

The long-term aims of the new German administration were no longer secret — to regain either by political or military means the territories of Saarland and Rhineland lost after the Great War, to form a single Reich incorporating Austria, the Sudetenland of Czechoslovakia and the 'Polish Corridor' that provided access for Poland to the Baltic Sea and separated East Prussia from the rest of the homeland. A further aim was to undertake limited war to incorporate Western Poland, from where an attack might later be launched against the USSR.

The Treaty of Versailles allowed Germany (rather optimistically) to maintain only an internal, defensive

security service but abroad, offensive espionage was secretly organised. An Amt Auslandsnachrichten und Abwehr (Intelligence and Defence Department) was responsible to the High Command of the Armed Forces (Oberkommando der Wehrmacht—OKW). The Abwehr was divided into Abteilungen (Sections), Abt I being responsible for espionage, Abt II for subversion and sabotage, and Abt III for counter-espionage. Abt I was further sub-divided into Fremde Heere (Foreign Armies), Marine, Luft and Technik-Luft (Air Intelligence) and Wirtschaft (Industry). Operational outstations, Abwehrstellen, were located at each Wehrkreis (Military Zone) of Germany, Amt Hamburg being responsible for obtaining military intelligence in the United Kingdom.

While the Luftwaffe was still a secret air force, the Abwehr had employed a Great War pilot, *Flugkapitan* Theodor Rowehl of the commercial air-survey company Hansa-Luftbild GmbH, to obtain photographs of the frontier defences of neighbouring countries. For reconnaissance along the Polish border he was given the use of a special version of the Junkers 34 transport aircraft, the Ju W34, D-1119, that had achieved the world altitude record of 12,739 metres in May 1929, flown from Dessau by W. Neuenhofen. Towards the end of 1933 Rowehl was appointed Head of the Staff Photographic Section of Luftkreis VI (See), under the direct command of the RLM, to advise on the development of camera installations, photographic techniques and the design of suitable aircraft.

In January 1935, Admiral Wilhelm Canaris was appointed Head of the Abwehr and on 1 March Rowehl was given the rank of *Hauptmann* in the new Luftwaffe that was announced to the Western powers by Hitler a week later. Rowehl was given authority to form a special air unit for reconnaissance, composed of crews from the state airline, Deutsche Lufthansa, with Siegfried Knemeyer as his deputy.

Reconnaissance squadrons in the Luftwaffe were divided into short-range *Nahaufklärungsstaffeln* for tactical work in support of the army, and long-range *Fernaufklärungsstaffeln* for strategic work.

Each Luftflotte had at least one composite *Fernaufklärungsgruppe* (FAG) to co-ordinate strategic reconnaissance activities within the Air Fleet's sphere of influence. In fact, one outstanding feature of the Luftflotten was the proportion of reconnaissance aircraft within each offensive force, comprising one-fifth of the total force of operational aircraft. By September 1939, there were some 50 *Aufklärungsstaffeln* available to support the war strategy of the coming months.

Standard tactical reconnaissance aircraft in 1939 were the Heinkel He 46 and the Henschel Hs 126. The He 46 started life as a biplane in 1931 but soon dispensed with its lower wing to give the observer a clearer view of the ground below. There were only 65 left in service in 1939, the main short-range reconnaissance aircraft by then being the more modern Hs 126. The Luftwaffe had 275 of these high-wing monoplanes, with a fully automatic camera in the fuselage bay.



The principal long-range reconnaissance aircraft of the day was the Dornier Do 17. Still in service were some 14 Heinkel He 45s, the longer range biplane predecessor to the He 46 that was equally long in the tooth, but the main brunt of strategic reconnaissance work was borne by Dornier's 'Flying Pencil'. In its heyday the Do 17 could out-pace any single-engined fighter in existence; the Do 17V8 left everything behind in the Circuit of the Alps in July 1937. At the time the Gloster Gauntlet with a top speed of 230 mph was entering RAF service, the graceful shoulder-winged Do 17 could reach 243 mph. The Luftwaffe had 257 available when Hitler invaded Poland.

The automatic Reihenbildner was still the standard Luftwaffe camera, albeit improved and now fitted with Zeiss lenses of either 20, 50 or 75 cm focal length. As the Luftwaffe operated mainly at medium altitudes, the types most in evidence were the RB 20/30 and RB 50/30.

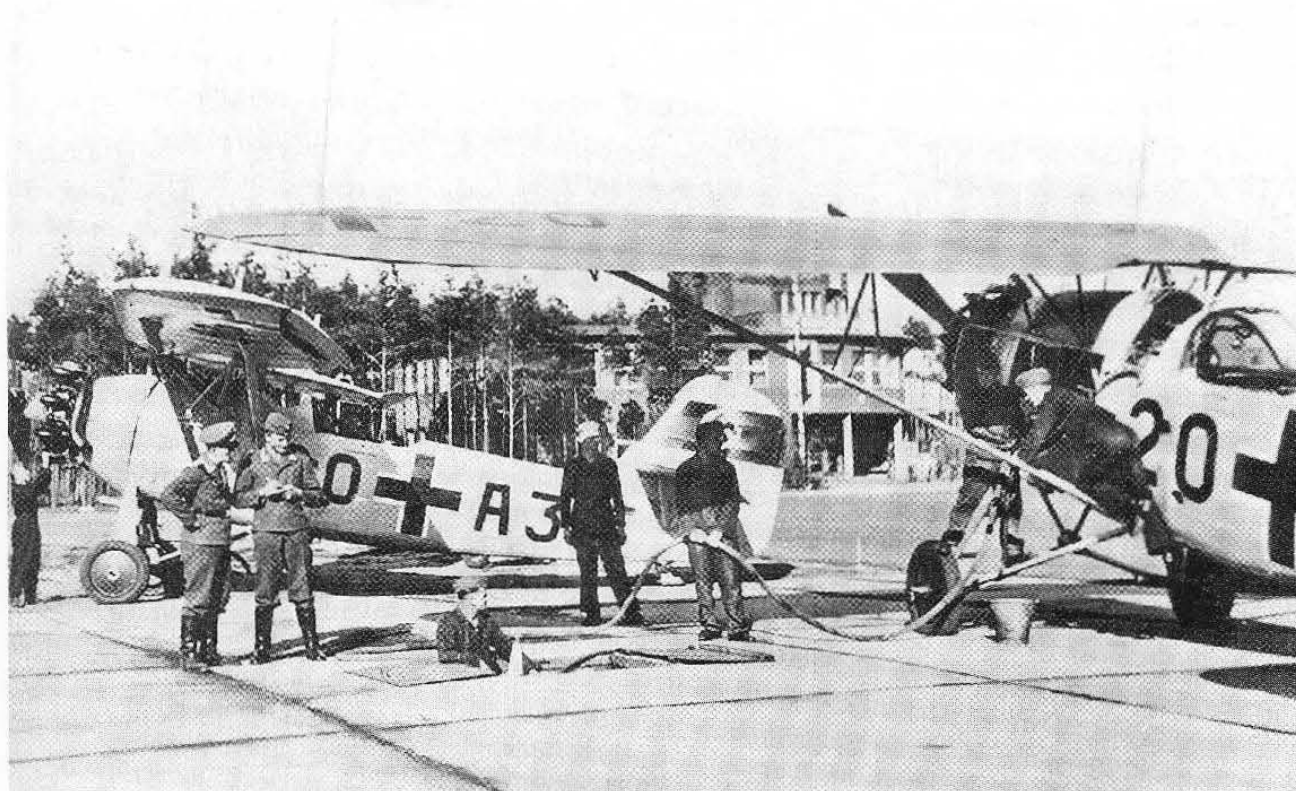
There were far more trained Photographic Interpreters in Germany than in Britain in 1939. The Luftwaffe photo-intelligence headquarters was located at Zossen. German PIs were, however, generally much less flexible than their British counterparts. Although both air forces recruited from the better educated sections of society, over 60 per cent of Luftwaffe PIs were NCOs, reflecting the German view that photo-interpretation was largely a mechanical process. In the Luftwaffe, PIs were taught to 'read' rather than interpret prints. Photo-reading involved the up-dating of maps from aerial photographs taken over the area of immediate operations; the photo-reader, when faced by an industrial complex, would only be able to declare that 'it is an industrial complex'. The British photo-interpreter on the other hand would break the industrial complex down into its component parts.

The PIs of the Luftwaffe have often been criticised because they did not use stereoscopes in their day to day work, and this has been cited as an example of their inferiority compared with the RAF. This criticism is unfair because circumstances alter cases. Speed was of the essence in a Blitzkrieg and the Luftwaffe photo-readers

usually worked directly from negatives placed on a viewing screen. The Germans did possess some very fine stereoscopes, but their PIs rarely used them because any evaluation of the information they extracted from their prints was left to the *Bildoffizier* in charge of the *Staffelbildgruppe* (Squadron Photo Group) but it left the Germans at a severe disadvantage when they tried to employ PR for strategic purposes as the war progressed.

There were several Luftwaffe officers who played a large part in the initial development of PR in Germany: men like *Generalmajor* Fischer who supervised the training of PIs and who wrote a number of interpretation training manuals or *General* Richard Schimpf who championed the technical development of aerial photography and photogrammetry before the war. But if there was a Luftwaffe equivalent of Sidney Cotton, driving force behind the British Air Ministry's interest in photo-reconnaissance, it was *Oberstleutnant* Theodor Rowehl.

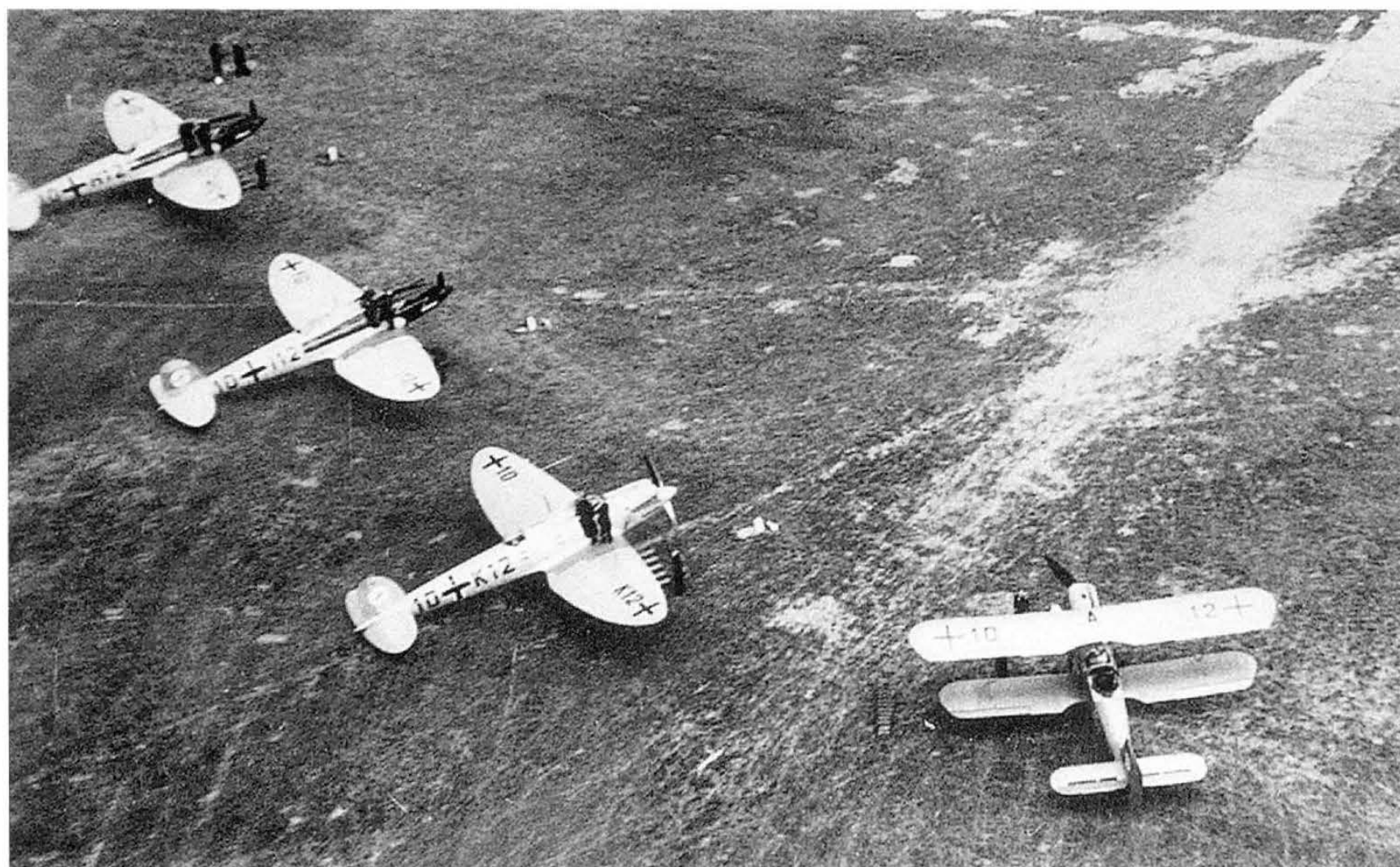
Rowehl was promoted Major on 20 April 1936. Personnel of his 'Kommando Rowehl' were employed as staff pilots by Dornier, Heinkel and Junkers, and as crews on long-distance, so-called 'route-proving' journeys and routine scheduled flights by Deutsche Lufthansa over foreign countries for reconnaissance needed by the Luftwaffe Ic (Intelligence) Branch, headed by *Oberst* Josef (Beppo) Schmid, and by the Amt Auslands of the Abwehr. These offices required photographic coverage of the military, naval and air force installations and the industrial and communications centres of neighbouring countries, any of which could be considered a future enemy of Germany as Nazi policy developed. At the time the OKL envisaged its units as at permanent readiness, seeing France and Poland as potential adversaries.



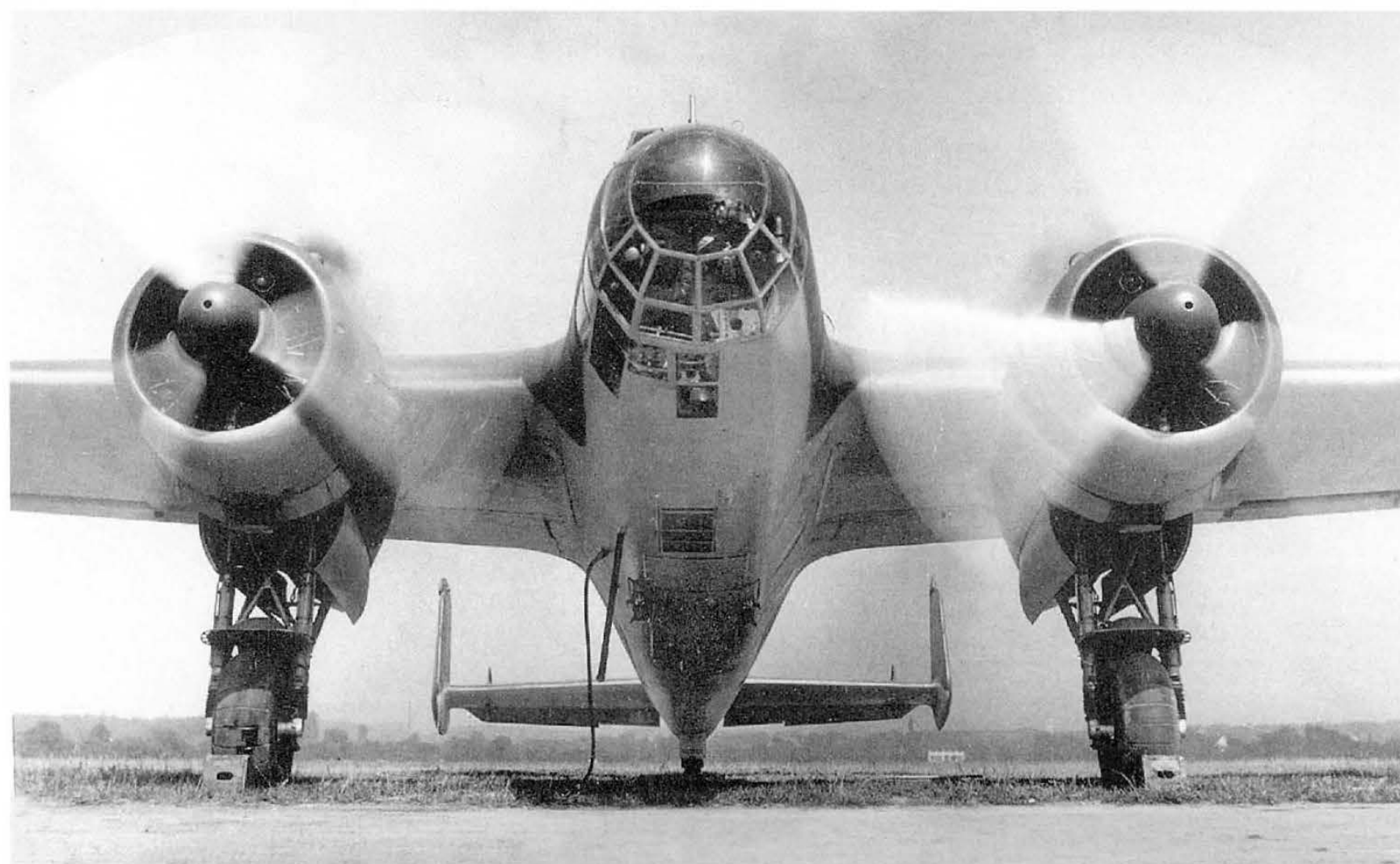
5: Mainstay of most of the short-range reconnaissance units in the mid-1930s was the Heinkel He 46. These all-silver aircraft of Aufkl.Gr (H)/212 or 52 are being refuelled from underground fuel tanks, possibly at Cottbus, sometime between late 1937 and April 1939



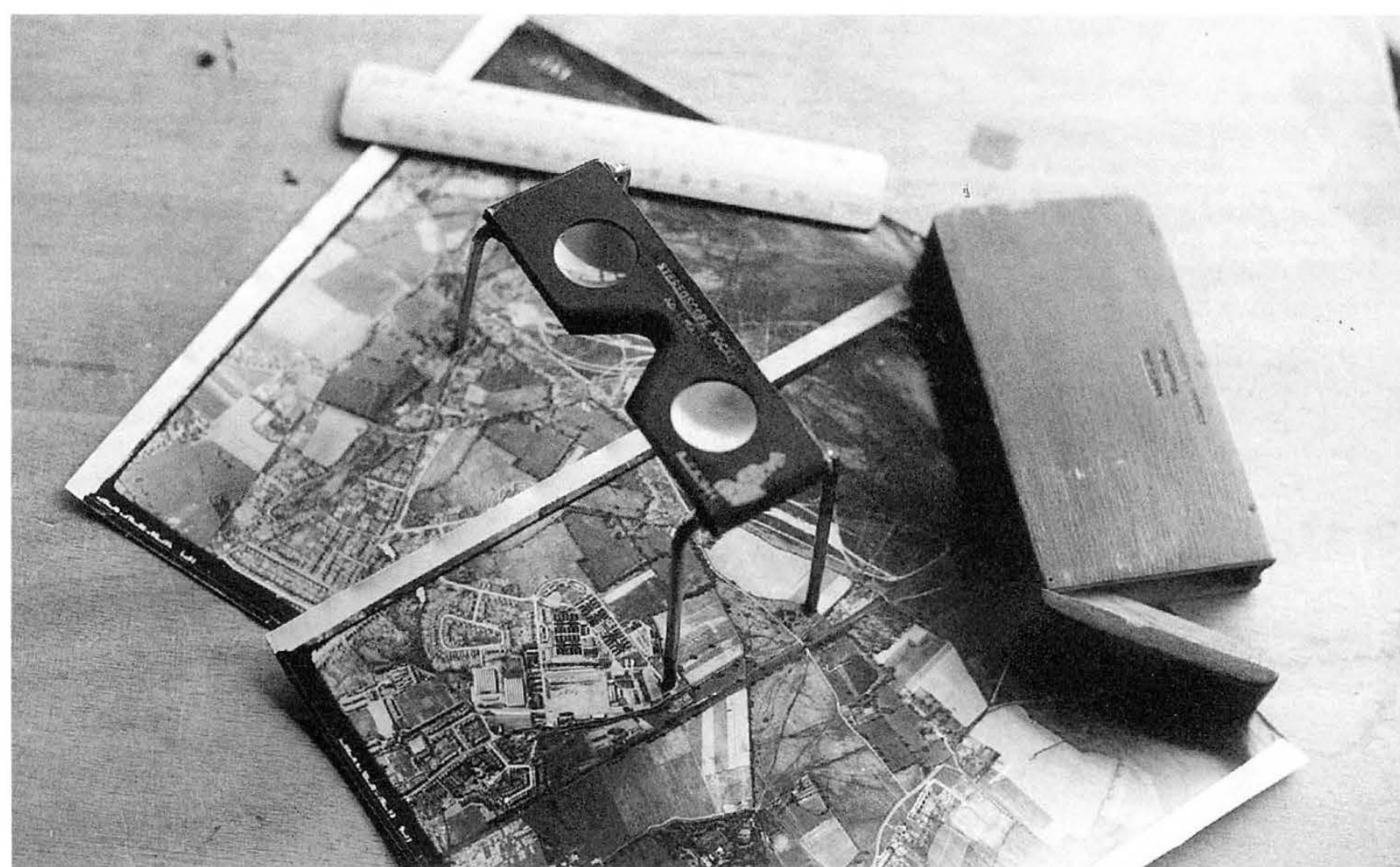
6: Great hopes were placed on the Heinkel He 70 monoplane in the reconnaissance role. These aircraft of Aufkl.Gr 121 at Neuhausen in 1936 were lined up for inspection alongside the older He 45 biplanes of the unit. Both types saw use in Spain and limited use in World War II, but were soon superseded by more modern and effective types. Note the highly unusual white nose and lack of a fuselage flash on 10+K12



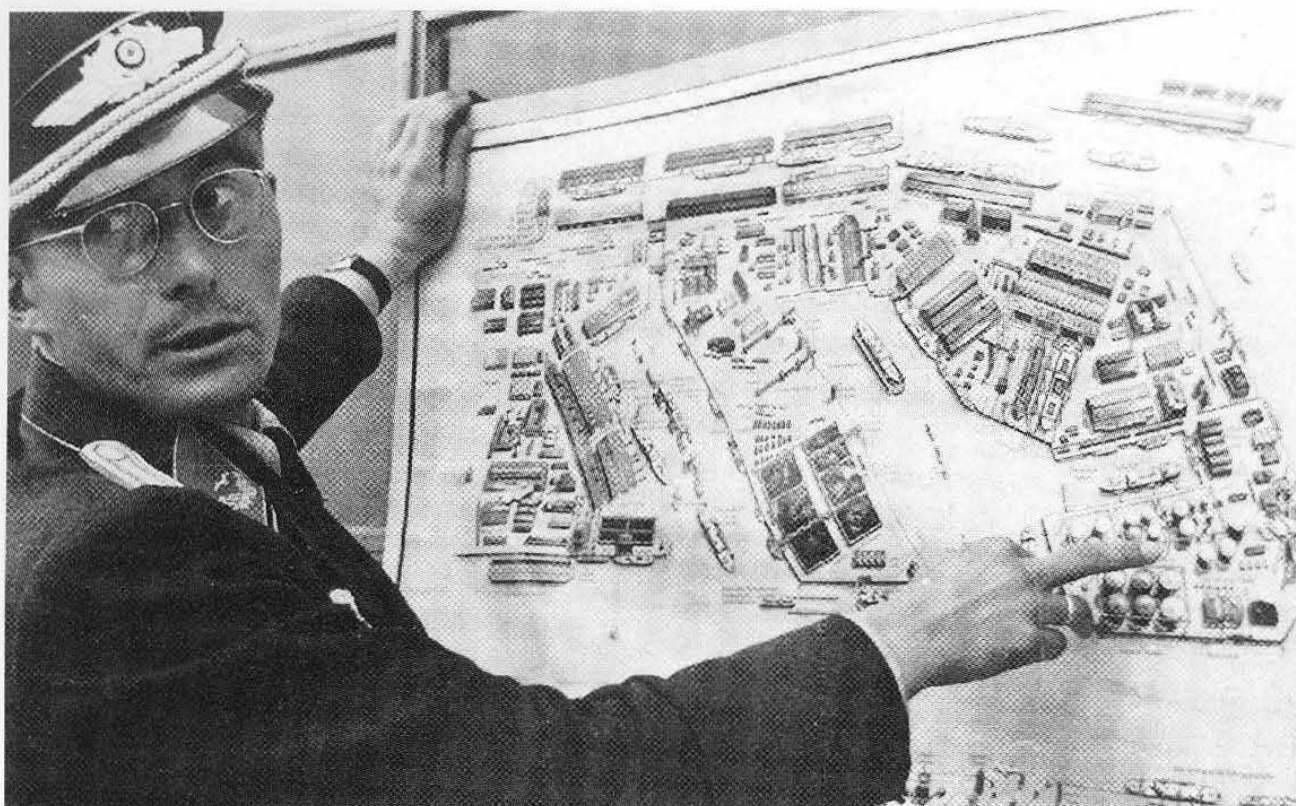
7: In the immediate pre-war period and for most of the first year of the war, easily the most capable reconnaissance aircraft available to the Luftwaffe and the Wehrmacht General Staff planners was the Dornier Do 17P. This unidentified example running up its BMW 132N engines clearly displays the under-fuselage camera windows and racks for flares or light bombs



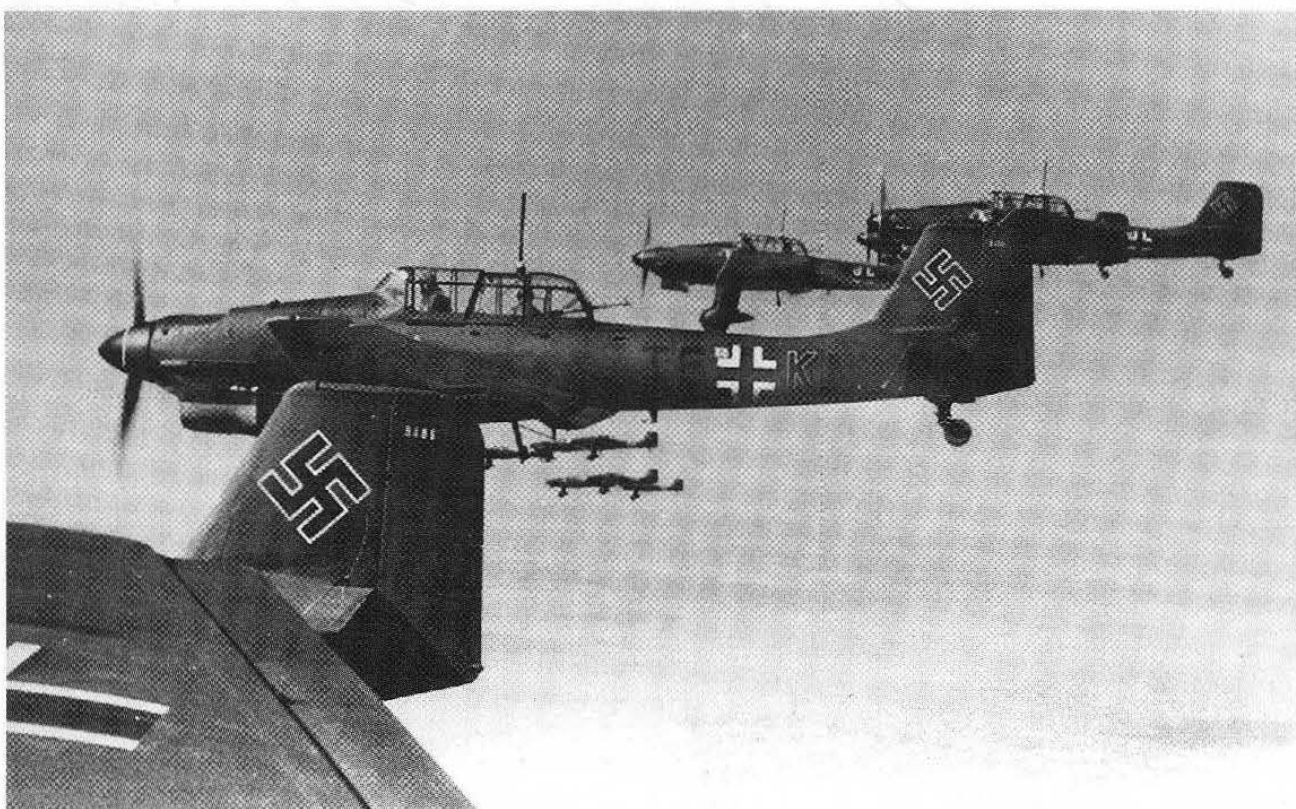
8: After the pictures had been taken, analysis of the results lay with the Luftwaffe photo-interpreters. Shown here are the typical tools of the trade: the pictures themselves, a scale rule and stereoscopic glasses. In theory, planning and operational decisions should have been made as a result of the conclusions reached by the PIs but these were often overlaid by internal political considerations, particularly if the evidence was unpalatable to the higher echelons of the leadership



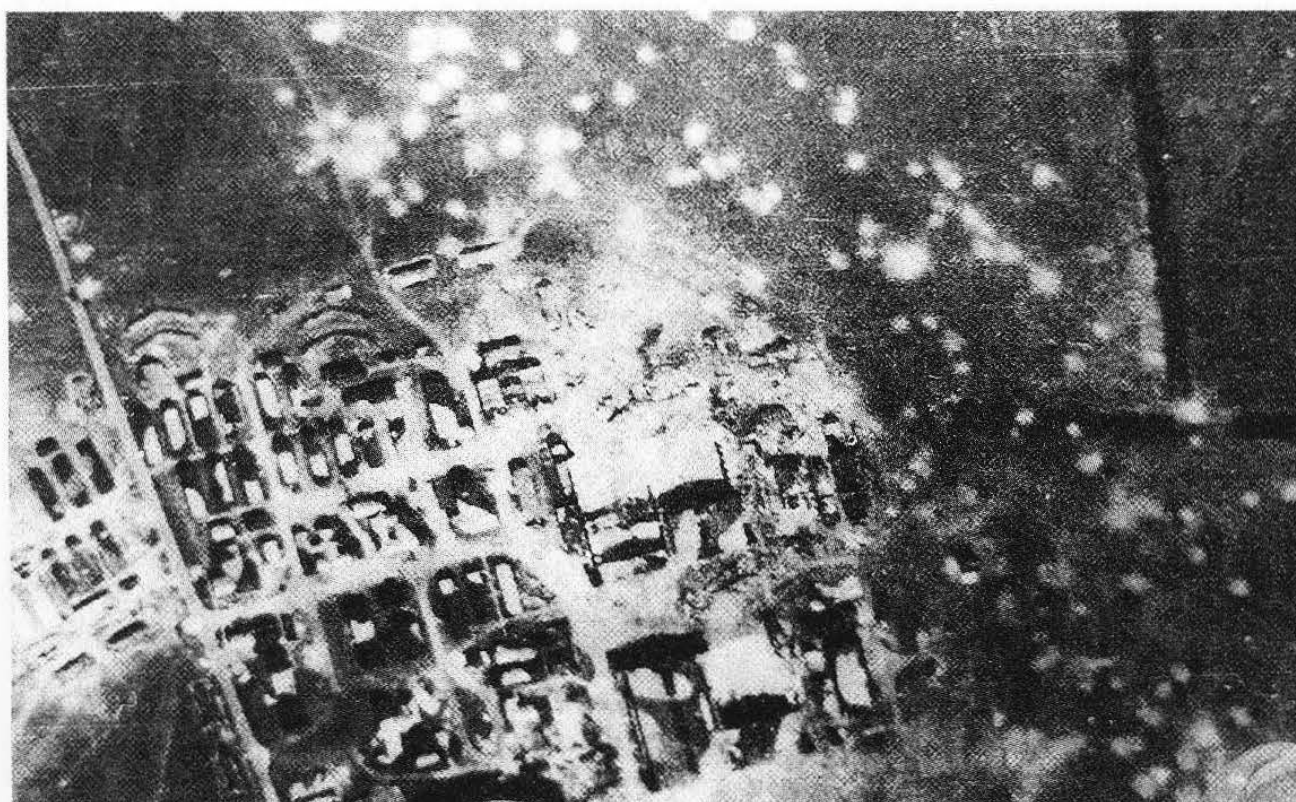




**9:** A Luftwaffe Leutnant points out typical strategic bombing targets, in this case docks and oil storage installations. Note that he is using a schematic drawing rather than an actual aerial photo, probably during a training session rather than at a real briefing to aircrews



**10:** Cause. Using photo intelligence from the reconnaissance units and other sources where possible, the Luftwaffe bomber crews set about their business. These Ju 87B-2s of 5./St.G.2 are actually on a training mission over their home base of Bonn-Hangelar during the winter of 1939-40. By May 1940 their training was being put to highly effective use in France and the Low Countries, followed shortly thereafter by raids against English south coast ports and cities such as Portsmouth and nearby airfields



**11:** Effect. The results of a Luftwaffe raid on the airfield at Lympne, near Hythe, during the first phases of the Battle of Britain, photographed in September 1940. The base had been heavily bombed on 12 August and again by Ju 87s on the 13th but with negligible effect upon RAF Fighter Command's operations





## THE CAUSES OF CONFLICT

### Believers and deceivers

In retrospect, it is abundantly clear that the Second World War was an inevitable result of the manner in which the Great War of 1914-1918 ended. During the late summer of 1918 the Imperial German Armies on the Western Front failed in their final bid to break the Allied line. Having supported revolution in the Tsar's Russia, Germany found that the 'infection' of the revolt had spread to the home front. Military and civilian morale so deteriorated that rebellion broke out and the Emperor, Kaiser Wilhelm II, fled to neutral Holland. On 11 November, the High Command agreed to the terms of an Armistice with the Western Powers. The General Staff, however, accepted no blame for military or political disaster, neither for their own failings nor the low morale of their beaten armies, but placed instead the responsibility on the new 'politicians' who were allowing the Fatherland to sink into near-anarchy.

By 1818 the war was over and in 1920, a Treaty of Versailles was agreed. The Treaty placed on the 'democratic' German Government an impossible burden of war repa-

rations, mainly due to unrealistic French demands, but the German authorities did not have the authority to contain disorder in their cities and industrial areas. In time, an opportunity opened for the growth of a popularly supported *National Sozialistische Deutsche Arbeiter Partei* (NSDAP) i.e. the Nazis, which gained local and, eventually, national control under its Führer or Leader, Adolf Hitler. Although of Austrian origin and outside the Prussian Junker class from whom the senior military staff were traditionally drawn, Hitler gathered about him a group of efficient generals and some political adventurers who foresaw and planned a resurgence of German power in Europe and overseas, although they believed that any ensuing war could not be successfully fought until at least 1942, when they could have developed advanced weapons and their Wehrmacht (Armed Forces) to use them with effect.

Hitler's political aims were concentrated on the gradual gaining of *Lebensraum* (living space) for the German nation, expanding to become a Third Empire into the under-developed lands of Eastern Europe, to the Urals and even to the Caucasus, all parts of Stalin's Communist Empire, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

The dream of a new German Empire "to last a thousand years" was partly built upon the acknowledged technical abilities of the Germans and partly upon the bizarre

**12 Above:** SS troops carrying SA 'Deutschland Erwache' — Germany Awake! — standards march into the Luitpoldhain grounds during the 1933 Reichs Party Day. The standards were later 'consecrated' by Hitler himself during a typically grandiose Nazi ceremony. As the SS were the elite troops of the SA (at least during their early days) they received the 'honour' of being standard-bearers



assumption of a Nordic nation descended from a remote (and fictional) Aryan race of physical perfection and intellect; laughable, were it not taken so seriously. The belief in this spurious philosophy formed the basis of policies that became a Nazi creed and later permitted the astounding brutalities against the 'Untermensch' (the 'sub-human' peoples of the Soviet Union) as well as against the Jews of Europe. The rules (as with all Nazi policies) were bent when advantages could be gained, as an acceptance appeared to be made of the rights of the 'Ostvolk' by the formation of Ethnic Legions and the 'Russian Liberation Army', although Hitler privately declared that he had no intention of allowing any autonomy to his Russian 'allies'.

Two generations and a half-century later, still no-one has satisfactorily explained how many ordinary Germans were somehow able to reconcile the Nazi fantasies with their Christian beliefs. All faiths and beliefs are the result of deliberate choice; to followers of some religions and philosophies, Christianity itself (of whatever denomination) appears an absurdity because it has no 'factual' basis—only a basis of faith. A senior Gestapo officer stated simply: "...an enemy of the State is anyone who consistently opposes the People, the Party and the State, their ideological tenets or their political actions".

Hermann Göring, a First War fighter pilot, was appointed Prussian Minister of the Interior to maintain order during the Nazi rise to power. To what extent he was successful in this task is not clear, but the appointment gave him considerable authority and the position of Hitler's eventual successor should the occasion arise. In 1934, with remarkable foresight, Britain's Chiefs of Staff warned of Germany's plans for conquest and that preparations be made for war in five years' time. At that time, the RAF stood no chance of emerging victorious against new aircraft developed in Germany. On 1 March the existence of a Reichs Luftwaffe (State Air Force) was officially announced to the world with Göring becoming its head. Heinrich Himmler, head of the Führer's Schutz Staffel (Protection Squad), began expanding the SS from a small company of 'bully-boys' into an armed force which took over the Reich security services, including the Gestapo, and became a rival to the established Wehrmacht. The SS was intended as an elite Aryan force whose men took an oath of loyalty to Hitler, not to Germany: "I swear to thee, Adolf Hitler, as Führer and Chancellor of the German Reich, Loyalty and Bravery. I vow to thee and to the superiors whom thou shalt appoint, Obedience unto Death, so help me God."

In Italy a less extreme, though not dissimilar 'Fascist' party took control under another leader ('il Duce'), Benito Mussolini, and the Government set about a military adventure in Africa to annex Abyssinia to the Italian Empire. British and French Governments threatened military action and, although British naval and air units in the Mediterranean were put on a war footing, popular feeling was against making war on behalf of so distant a country. It was clear to the Germans and Italians that they could act with impunity. A compact, the Rome-Ber-

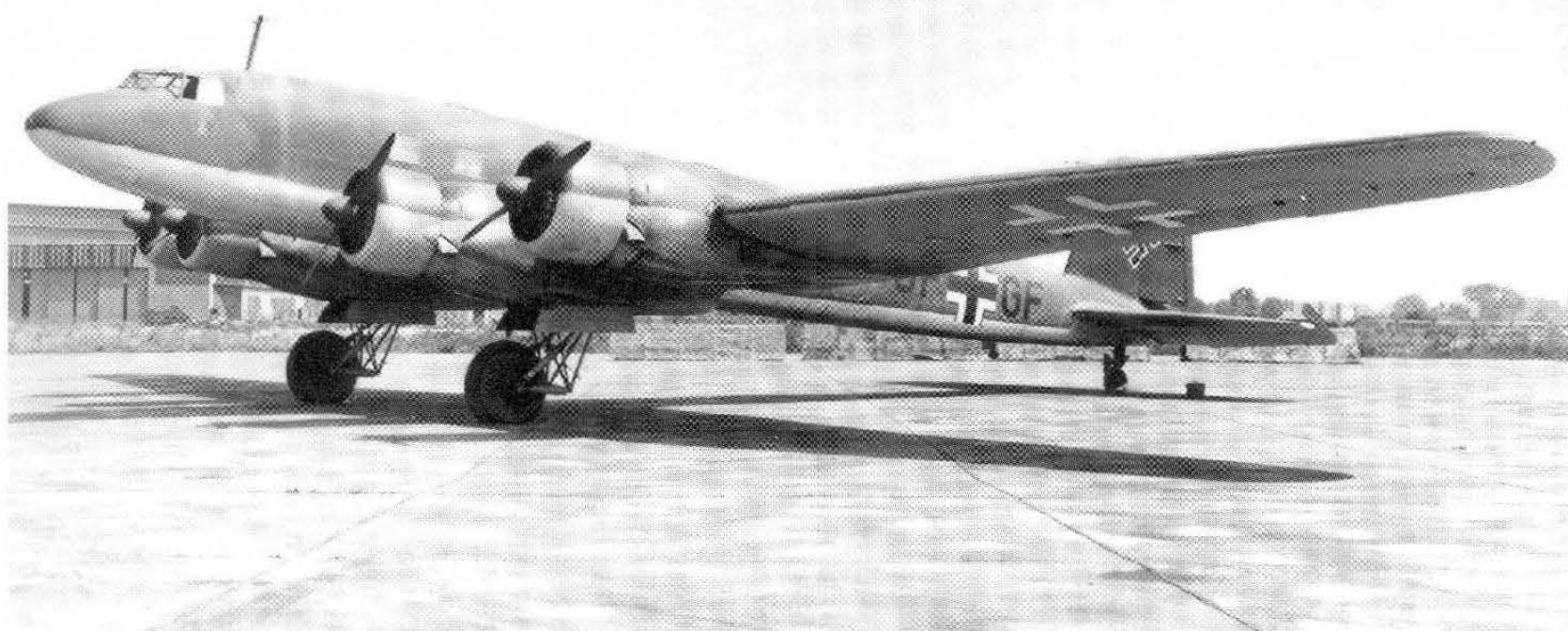
lin Axis, was joined and, by mid-1936, while Germany took political liberties on France's eastern frontier, the Italians overran Abyssinia as a result of a dishonourable secret 'Hoare-Laval Pact'. The Axis Powers were now sufficiently confident to provide (mostly air) support for a rebellion by General Franco against the Left-wing Government of Spain, making use of the experience to practise and perfect air operations in concert with ground forces.

Germany took advantage of British and French military and moral weakness in 1936 by occupying the Rhineland in defiance of the Versailles Treaty and annexed first Austria, then the Sudetenland and finally the whole of Czechoslovakia in 1938. After the ensuing 'Munich Crisis', Hitler announced that he had "no more territorial claims in Europe" and the British Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, flew home with a "scrap of paper" (to quote Hitler again) declaring that the Munich Accord promised "peace in our time". Even so it was clear to the military staffs of Britain and France that war against Germany was inevitable within a few years and preparations were begun for large-scale re-armament including, most fortunately, new high-performance aircraft for the RAF.

Before the outbreak of war, the Germans had been flying experimental high-flying aircraft to take photographs of potential military and industrial objectives beyond Germany's frontiers. A 'Staffel zur besonderen Verwendung Ob.d.L.' (Special Duties Flight of the C-in-C Luftwaffe) was formed in 1934, flying airliners for clandestine operations, (the He 111V-2, D-ALIX and He 111C-0, D-AXAV, among others). In 1939 this unit was enlarged to become the 'Aufklärungsgruppe Ob.d.L.' under the direct control of Göring who, it seems, paid no great heed to its discoveries. The aircraft employed was the Dornier Do 215, a development of the Do 17 'Flying Pencil' fast reconnaissance monoplane, so successful in Spain.

With such preparations made, a small group of obsessional men set about a course that threatened destruction of their nation and the culture of Europe, through a fearsome conjunction of vainglory and evil. Their first and greatest mistake was a failure to believe in the sincerity of the British and French Governments' support for far-off Poland when a falsified border incident gave the Wehrmacht, with the Luftwaffe its leading arm, the opportunity to begin the Blitzkrieg (Lightning War) beloved of military theoreticians, on 1 September 1939. So the countries of Europe were committed, in the words of Robert W. Service, to "that devil's madness, War."





## GÖRING'S SPECIAL FORMATIONS

### Kommando Rowehl

All three branches of the Wehrmacht were aware of the importance of tactical reconnaissance and the Luftwaffe consequently included a far larger proportion of reconnaissance units than the air forces of Germany's potential adversaries. Five long-range reconnaissance Staffeln, were formed in 1937 under Luftwaffe control, their services available to all three military arms if war should break out. The reconnaissance Staffeln were later grouped according to their purposes: 'Fernaufklärungsgruppen' — Aufkl.Gr.(F) — for long-range reconnaissance for the High Command and 'Nahe- or 'Heeres-Aufklärungs-gruppen' — Aufkl.Gr.(H) — for short-range tactical reconnaissance in support of the Army.

The need for a strategic over-view became clear and Göring set up, under his direct control, an Air Ministry Special Duties Flight, variously referred to as the 'zbV Staffel beim RLM' and the '1.Fliegerstaffel zur besonderen Verwendung' (zbV — on special duty) set up at Kassel-Rothwesten as an element of the Flugbereitschaft bei RLM (Air Ministry Readiness Flight), based at Berlin's Staaken aerodrome, under the command of Rowehl, now an *Oberstleutnant*. Rowehl's test-pilots and crews tested a variety of aircraft including the Heinkel He 70F high-speed single-engined reconnaissance monoplane, whose civil equivalent was to be a fast mail-plane. The He 70F proved to be insufficiently stable

for photographic reconnaissance and was phased out of operational service.

The Spanish General Franco, leading a rebellion in Morocco, appealed to Germany and Italy for military support against the Republican Government in the Civil War. The Luftwaffe provided air transport in 1936 and a month later the 'Legion Kondor' was formed to fight in Spain. There the Luftwaffe gained valuable tactical experience with its new aircraft, experience that brought about the formation of a new 'Fliegerführer zur besonderen Verwendung' — Fliegerführer-zbV (Air Headquarters on Special Duties). Plans set out in 1937 were for the formation of ten short-range reconnaissance Gruppen and ten long-range Staffeln for Army support, and for 13 other Staffeln under control of the Oberbefehlshaber der Luftwaffe at Berlin/Staaken.

The Staffel (approximating to an RAF squadron) was the smallest operational flying unit of the Luftwaffe, commanded by a Staffelnkapitän of *Hauptmann* or *Oberleutnant* rank. Initially having nine to 12 aircraft, during the course of the war, Staffel strength was generally increased to 16 aircraft.

The Gruppe was the smallest administrative unit, under command of a Gruppenkommandeur (*Oberstleutnant*, *Major* or *Hauptmann*). Initially the Gruppe was made up of three Staffeln and a Stabskette (Staff Flight), some 30 aircraft in all, but in many cases the Gruppe was enlarged to include four Staffeln.

Above the Gruppe was the Geschwader, usually with an establishment of three Gruppen and a Stabskette, a nominal total of 94 aircraft, but most Kampfgeschwader (Combat Bomber Wings) added a fourth Gruppe for operational training and reserve crews; on rare occasions a

**13 Above:** Focke-Wulf Fw 200A-3 W.Nr. 2895 was originally delivered to Deutsche Lufthansa as D-AMHC, Nordmark, in 1938. Seen here in later Luftwaffe camouflage and with the code GF+GF, it was one of three similar aircraft converted for clandestine reconnaissance service with the special unit commanded by Theodor Rowehl. The aircraft was lost in January 1943 at Pitomnik in Russia while serving as a transport



fifth Gruppe was added. The commander bore the title Geschwaderkommodore (*General-Major, Oberst* or *Oberstleutnant*). All the Geschwader and independent Gruppen had arabic numeral designations, their Gruppen were given roman numeral designations and the Staffeln roman numerals, consecutive within the Geschwader; the 1. 2. and 3. Staffeln formed the I.Gruppe, the 4. 5. and 6. Staffeln the II.Gruppe and so on.

Each regional Luftflotte (Air Fleet) had at least one Fernaufklärungsgruppe (FAGr) to coordinate operations within its area of responsibility and, in all, reconnaissance aircraft made up approximately one fifth of the Luftwaffe air strength by July 1939, in 74 land-based Staffeln ready to provide Army support. The main reconnaissance aircraft was the Dornier Do 17 which could outpace any single-engined fighter of that time. The Luftwaffe had 257 of these aircraft in service by the beginning of September 1939.

In 1936 the first of three Heinkel He 111 airliners was handed over by Deutsche Lufthansa to the zbV Staffel beim RLM. The prototype He 111V4, D-AHAO, *Dresden*, W.Nr. 1968, was followed in 1937 by He 111C-03 D-AXAV, *Köln*, W.Nr. 1830 and D-ALIX *Rostock*, W.Nr. 715, all these aircraft remaining in their civil airline finish and markings. Ostensibly used for frequent 'route-testing' flights over France, Great Britain and the Soviet Union, they were considerably modified by installing super-charged engines, additional fuel-tanks and cameras. Over the USSR during a programme of flights to the Crimea and the Caucasus, D-ALIX crashed in Soviet territory but, although the Soviet Government was aware of the purpose of the flights, its ambiguous attitude towards German provocation restrained diplomatic protest. These flights were considered highly successful by the OKL and Rowehl was promoted *Oberstleutnant* in November 1938.

In a Luftwaffe reorganisation of February 1939, the responsibilities of the Luftflotten were reduced. The Ministry of Aviation (RLM) became the supreme authority headed by the Reichsminister der Luftfahrt und Oberbefehlshaber der Luftwaffe (RdL u ObdL) *Generalfeldmarschall* Hermann Göring. A Technisches Amt (Technical Department) controlled several Testing Stations (Erprobungsstellen), the principal E-Stelle being that at Rechlin where aircraft, aero engines and equipment were tested.

Although Hitler is recorded as having refused permission for reconnaissance over the United Kingdom, a close watch was maintained on the increased British preparation for war. Little was known about the British development of 'radio direction-finding' (RDF), later to be termed 'radio-location and ranging' (radar) so a series of reconnaissance flights was made across the North Sea and off the East Coast of England from May to August 1939 by the airship LZ130 *Graf Zeppelin* with trained observers aboard, among them Siegfried Knemeyer, regarded as an 'ace' navigator of Lufthansa. The purpose was to monitor the field strength and positions of the British RDF installations. The method was extremely primitive, using an 'observation car', (known as a 'cloud car' during

the 1914-18 War), a 24-year-old relic which had its first use with Zeppelin Z.XII. In *Zeppelin Adventures*, Rolf Marben described it: "This was a large, deep basket with sufficient room for one man... The 'basket' was let down by a cable while the airship was in motion; to this cable was affixed a telephone line which put the observer in direct communication with the control car. This 'basket' could be lowered to a depth of 800 metres below the level of the ship, but it swung out a considerable distance behind it".

During the Great War the device, actually a small, streamlined, bomb-shaped nacelle, enabled an observer to be lowered into clear air whilst the ship was hidden in cloud. The various transmissions received and recorded were believed to be those of the most advanced British system and found to be inferior to results from German systems; in fact, the purpose of *Graf Zeppelin's* flights were well understood by the British and the tracking was not by the most developed systems, so as to misinform the Germans.

The opinion of the Luftwaffe Staff in August was that its Air Force was not yet sufficiently developed and trained to conduct a war beyond Continental Europe or to carry out strategic air attacks on Great Britain, for the Luftwaffe's programme of expansion and rearmament was not planned to be completed until 1942. The Staff opinion was ignored by the Nazi leadership and preparations for an attack on Poland, 'Fall Weiss' (Plan 'White') were begun in the belief, based on the fate of Czechoslovakia in 1938, that neither Britain nor France would go to war, in spite of their treaty obligations to Poland.

The signing of the Non-Aggression Pact between Germany and the Soviet Union on 23 August seemingly cleared obstacles to German eastward expansion. It allowed for the partition of Poland, Germany to occupy the greater part of that country whilst leaving the Soviet Union free to take over the Baltic States.

Hansa Luftbild GmbH was integrated with the RLM during the summer and two Focke-Wulf Fw 200 Condors of Lufthansa were handed over for military duties. With the possibility of war against the United Kingdom, the OKW asked for 'preliminary reconnaissance' of the Home Fleet base at Scapa Flow. At the end of August, FW 200s D-ASHH *Hessen* (the V10, W.Nr. 0001), D-AETA *Westfalen* (the V2, W.Nr. 2484) and D-AMHC *Nordmark* (the A-03, W.Nr. 2895) were flown to the Erprobungsstelle at Rechlin for conversion. For reconnaissance across the Baltic Sea and along the frontier with the Soviet Union, several (the number is not recorded) Heinkel He 111s were similarly used for a few months.

The Condors were transported for Hansa-Luftbild to the Versuchsstelle für Höhenflüge (High-Altitude Flight Test Station) under the command of *Oberstleutnant* Rowehl. All three FW 200s were modified to carry two Reihenbild Rb 50/30 cameras within the fuselage and the V10, D-ASHH, was fitted additionally with defensive armament of five machine-guns before being sent to Oranienburg on 14 November to join the unarmed V2 and S3.



A spurious border incident, an attack by a special subversive unit set up by the Abwehr and the SS, had provided the excuse to begin Fall Weiss on 1 September 1939. The following day Hitler offered to withdraw from Poland provided he was allowed to retain the Baltic port of Danzig (now Gdansk) and the 'Polish corridor'. On 3 September the British and French Governments declared war on Germany.

The success of the subversive unit and of Kampfgruppen (Combat Groups) organised by the Abwehr's Amt Breslau for operations within Poland led to the formation early in 1940 of the first of the clandestine 'special forces' that have since become a well-publicised element of the armed forces of all the major nations. This was given the cover-name Lehr und Bau Bataillon zbV 800 (Training and Works Battalion on Special Duties 800) to serve Abt II of the Abwehr. Originally composed largely of Volks-Deutsche, the Bataillon was soon to be used in the opening stages of further military moves the following spring and later was enlarged into the Lehr Regiment Brandenburg.

On the outbreak of war the 'Kommando Rowehl' was enlarged to become the Aufklärungsgruppe des Oberbefehlshaber der Luftwaffe (Reconnaissance Wing of the Air Force C-in-C), serving as Göring's clandestine flying unit. The Gruppe was made up of a Staff and two squadrons, the 1. and 2. Staffeln at Berlin-Staaken, acting quite independently of the air reconnaissance units controlled by the Luftflotten.

The first operational sorties were soon to be flown to the United Kingdom by an aircraft of the 1./Aufkl.Gr.Ob.d.L. over the British Home Fleet's northern base at Scapa Flow in the Orkney Islands on 5 September, and over Northern France to photograph the airfields at Thionville, Metz-Frescaty and Rouvres on 21 and 22 September. The Aufkl.Gr.Ob.d.L. was further enlarged and, it appears, began flying high-altitude sorties over Belgium and the Netherlands so that the Luftwaffe had full knowledge about the location of Belgian air defences by the end of the month. On 24 October the 8.(F) Aufkl/LG 2 which had undertaken much of the reconnaissance over Poland before the invasion and the 2.(F)/121 were incorporated in the new Gruppe as the 3. and 4. (F) Ob.d.L. with detachments at several airfields. By this time the Gruppe was equipped with the Do 17, Do 215 and He 111 aircraft. Among the Dornier 17s were seven specially built reconnaissance variants; four Do 17Rs (R1 to R4) similar to the Do 17M with DB 601 engines and three Do 17S models (S1 to S3, also with DB 601 in-line engines but with a forward fuselage similar to the Do 17Z).

On 23 November the Fw 200 V10 was taking off on its first reconnaissance to Scapa Flow from the airfield at Jever when both starboard engines failed but the pilot, *Flugkapitän* Martin Königs, managed to save the aircraft without serious damage and without injury to his crew. Newly-converted Fw 200Cs were soon to equip *Hptm* Edgar Petersen's 1./KG 40 as long-range maritime reconnaissance bombers.

By the end of the year the aircraft of the Kommando

Rowehl, were operating from several airfields. *Hptm* Karl Edmund Gartenfeld's 2. Staffel remained at Oranienburg, the Gruppe base (the town was also at various times the location of an SA camp, an SS regimental base and a concentration camp). The 1. and 3. Staffeln were then at Fritzlar, south of Kassel, for reconnaissance over France and flying from Jever near Wilhelmshaven to Britain.

Knemeyer, previously personal pilot to the Commander-in-Chief of the Army, was posted to the 3.(F)/Ob.d.L. at Fritzlar in January 1940. The Luftwaffe maintained the tradition of the *Lufstreitkräfte* of the 1914-1918 War, namely that the pilot was regarded as simply responsible for flying the aircraft which was usually commanded by an observer of senior rank; thus *Gefr* Knemeyer flew with *Lt* Ruhnke as his observer on many operations over Northern France and the English Channel. The Staffel at Fritzlar was provided with Junkers Ju 88 V13 and V14 prototypes of the Ju 88A, each fitted with mountings for a vertical Reihenbild Rb 50/30 and two oblique RL 20/30 cameras; these aircraft were known as Ju 88-A-1/Fs. Despite atrocious winter weather, flights were made as far as Paris and beyond, and to the Solent. The aircraft were so fast at their ceiling of 9,000 m that on one occasion when Knemeyer encountered a Spitfire off the Cherbourg Peninsula, he easily outpaced it at maximum altitude. Following a successful series of such flights Knemeyer was made up to the rank of *Oberleutnant*.

Of flights by the Ju 88 to Le Havre, Cherbourg and Brest in bad weather, Knemeyer wrote of 'tramlines', probably referring to the early installations of what in March were termed 'Knickebein' (bent leg) radio beacons. This was a highly sensitive development of the pre-war 'Lorenz' blind-landing system which could provide an accurate target fix with intersecting radio beams. The Lorenz system was of two slightly divergent radio beams, overlapping in a narrow zone along which an aeroplane was intended to fly. A single transmitter was switched alternately between two aerials, each transmitting briefly, one emitting a series of long tones ('dashes') and the other a series of shorter tones ('dots'). In the narrow overlap zone, where both signals were transmitted, a suitable radio receiver would produce a continuous tone and a suitably equipped aircraft could be flown accurately along this zone. 'Knickebein' extended the system with a zone width of .80 km at 161 km distance, the target position being indicated by a crossing radio beam from another transmitter.

By this time reconnaissance of the British Isles was made potentially more hazardous by the hitherto unsuspected efficiency of the integrated radio location system and defence control. As a result Luftwaffe reconnaissance, conducted mainly by the experienced crews of the Aufkl.Gr.(F)/ObdL and Aufkl.Gr.(F)/122 with support by the He 111s of Stab./KG 26 over the Channel and by Stab./KGr 100 as far as the Orkney Islands, suffered nine aircraft lost during the 'Phoney War'. During one such mission on 13 February 1940, an He 111H-3 of Stab./KGr 100, 6N+AB, testing a new guidance system, was shot down over the Thames Estuary with the loss of the entire



crew. Nine days later the Aufkl.Gr./Ob.d.L. lost an Heinkel He 111P-4, W.Nr. 1594, T5+OH, which was forced down near St. Abb's Head, Berwickshire, by a Spitfire of 602 Squadron, but was destroyed by its crew (*Lt.d.R* E.Grote, *Fw* Sprigath, *Uffz* Berger and *Uffz* Bachmann) who apart from the last-named were all captured uninjured.

The general success of Luftwaffe reconnaissance was considered a great danger, especially by the Admiralty. In *The War At Sea, Vol. I*, (HMSO, London 1954-61), Captain S.W. Roskill, the Royal Navy historian, wrote: "It must be admitted that, during the early months of the war, the procurement by the enemy of intelligence regarding our warship dispositions and movements was superior to our own. It is now plain that the enemy's advantage in this respect was achieved, firstly, through regular air reconnaissance of our bases."

From airfields in Bulgaria, the oil-producing areas of the Soviet Caucasus and parts of Syria and Turkey were now plotted, then attention was turned towards Scandinavia. In preparation for 'Weserübung' (Exercise Weser), the invasion of Denmark and Norway, the Aufkl.Gr.Ob.d.L. received an Fw 200C-1, BS+AH, which Cornelius Noell and co-pilot Siegfried Knemeyer flew from Königsberg to Kristiansand in Norway. Knemeyer then flew the aircraft to Oslo, Stavanger, Bergen and Trondheim. 'Weserübung' was intended to pre-empt an Allied landing in Norway, a great fear of Adolf Hitler throughout the war. The resulting German move was to provide the Luftwaffe with airfields in Denmark and sea and air bases along the Norwegian coast. 'Weserübung Sud' and 'Weserübung Nord', the invasions of Denmark and Norway, began on 9 April. With Denmark and Southern Norway soon occupied, a new command, *Fliegerführer Stavanger*, was formed at Stavanger-Sola in April, the command including detachments from the 1./ and 3.(F)/Ob.d.L.

Knemeyer later related how he arrived during a heavy RAF attack on Sola airfield and flew up a fjord for some distance until the raid was over, finding considerable destruction of German aircraft on the ground. During the following months the 3. Staffel flew He 111s from Stavanger-Sola, searching for British convoys off the coast of Northern Scotland and the Shetland Isles.

The unsatisfactory use of specialist crews of the 3. Staffel for *ad hoc* maritime reconnaissance was exemplified by Knemeyer and Ruhnke who were unable to identify the ships they came upon. Once, finding a submarine, neither was able to decide whether it was German or British; Knemeyer admitted that he knew only about pleasure sailing on the Wannsee, while Ruhnke, an ex-Army officer, knew nothing about ships!

'Fall Gelb', (Case Yellow) a long prepared plan to attack the Low Countries and France, was opposed by some of the German General Staff who believed that their forces were not ready for such an adventure when Germany's aim was expansion in the East. Some officers planned to depose Hitler in return for agreement to an 'honourable peace' with Britain and France. *Adm* Wilhelm

Canaris, Head of the Abwehr and opposed to Hitler, instructed *Gen* Hans Oster to establish contact with London early in 1940; this was done by intermediaries in the Vatican. At the beginning of May, when these contacts warned of an imminent German attack in the West, Holland mobilised and British and French forces moved towards the Belgian frontier.

Before the invasion began, photo-reconnaissance revealed new fortifications in the area around Sedan where the first stage of the plan, Operation 'Sichelschnitt' (Sickle-slash), required *Gen* Heinz Guderian's armour to drive through the Ardennes Forest and to cross the Meuse before French forces could be brought up to defend the river crossings. Some of the German Staff believed that the Ardennes plan should be abandoned because of the apparent strength of the defences, but at the beginning of May photographic interpretation showed that the defences were still unfinished.

When the attack was launched on 10 May 1940, aircraft of the Aufkl.Gr.(F)/Ob.d.L. took part in the reconnaissance over the Low Countries and France. The Kranz/Heuermann crew flying a Do 17 over Holland and Northern Belgium were shot down but were soon released by advancing German forces. The following month the Luftwaffe was attacking airfields and rail targets selected by the Aufkl.Gr. in Southern France; reconnaissance revealed some 300 aircraft on the Marseille group of airfields and 3,600 rail wagons on the southern railway networks during operations in June. During the summer of 1940, Junkers delivered to the Aufkl.Gr.(F)/Ob.d.L. the first Ju 86P, which flew a sortie over England at an altitude of nearly 14,020 m, the first of several such flights to be made over the English Midlands. Forty days after the attack began, Northern and Eastern France were overrun and the French Government came to sign an Armistice in the same railway coach at Rethondes in which the Armistice of November 1918 had been made final.

By the end of June it had become clear that the British Government would continue the war and on 16 July Hitler issued his 'Directive No.16' for Operation 'SEELÖWE' (Sealion), an invasion of England to take place on 21 September.

The Junkers Ju 86P was a greatly modified version of the obsolete Ju 86 bomber, having a pressurised cabin for the two-man crew, a greater wing-span and supercharged engines, and fitted with three cameras. Several Ju 86 P-1s and P-2s were provided to the 2.(F)/Ob.d.L. during the course of the year. At a time when the most advanced British reconnaissance aircraft, the Spitfire PR Mk.1, could reach 32,000 ft, the Ju 86P could easily attain 39,000 ft and up to 41,000 ft on occasions. These flights, when detected, were unchallenged and provided Göring with photographs of all the major operational airfields and cities of Great Britain. Thus the Gruppe established a pattern of successfully using specially developed aircraft for clandestine operations.

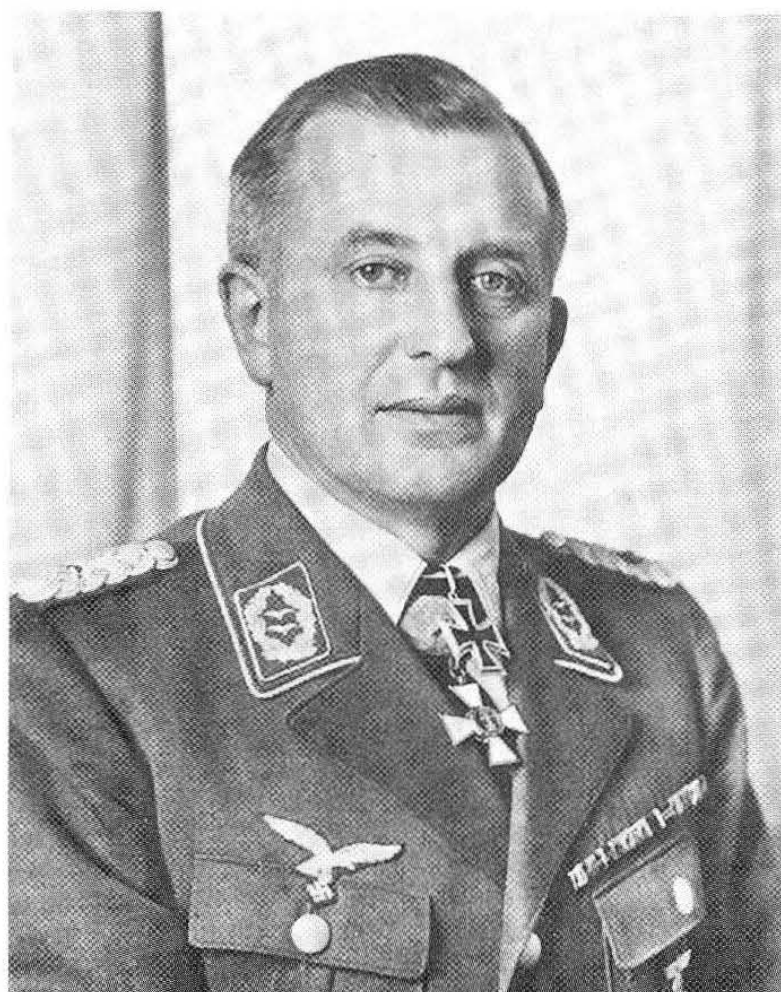
In fact, Rowehl continually pressed so successfully for improved aircraft and systems that the Gruppe became known, somewhat enviously, by other units of the



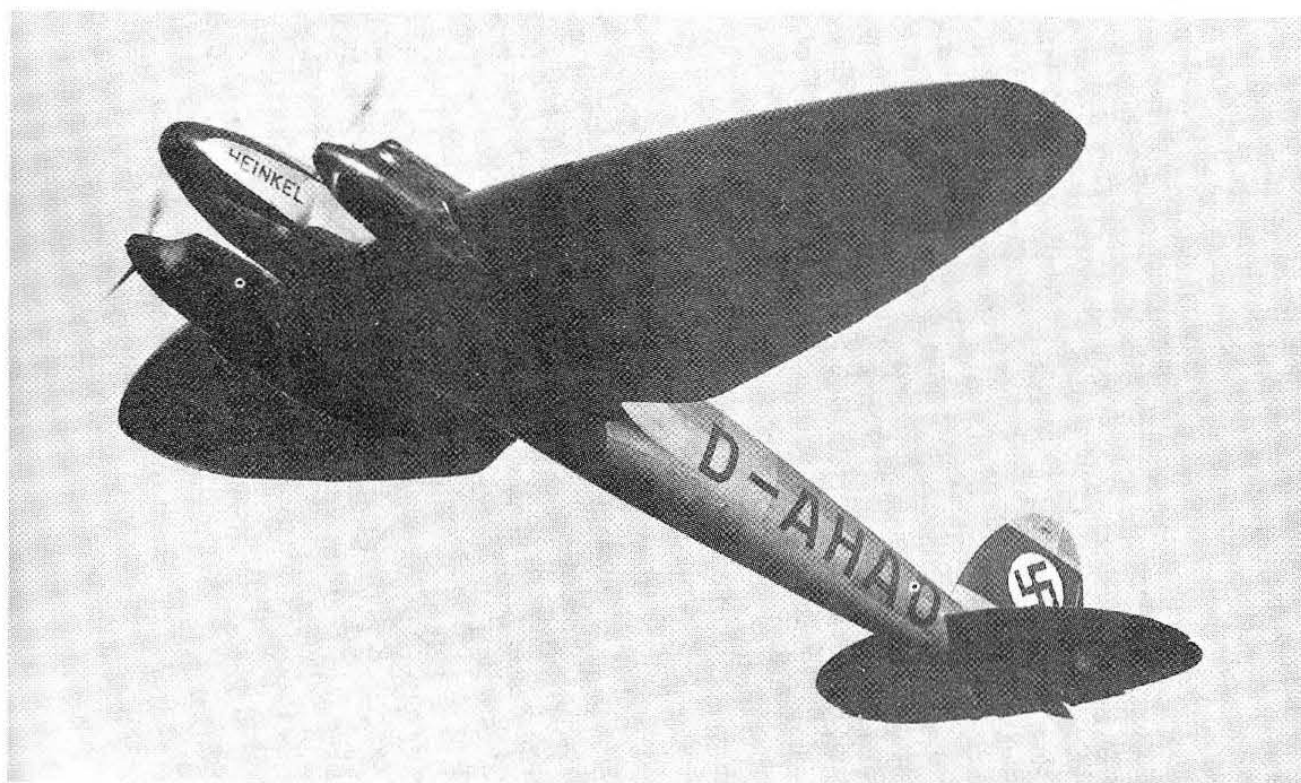
Luftwaffe as the 'Dienstleistungsbetrieb', which could be loosely translated as 'service fixers'.

Hitler's earlier opposition to the planting of 'sleepers' agents in the United Kingdom, and opinion in the OKW that France was the principal threat to German expansion, had hindered the Abwehr's work in Britain until early 1937. At the outbreak of war, however, some 253 operatives were at large in the United Kingdom. By late 1940, Abwehr stations were established in the newly-occupied countries and units of Abt 1 were attached to the OKW. Under the High Command *Gen* Ulrich Liss's *Fremde Heere West* (Foreign Armies West) coordinated intelligence gathered from the United Kingdom and Western Europe, and *Oberst* Eberhard Kinzel's *Fremde Heere Ost* that from Eastern Europe.

**14 Right:** Theodor Rowehl, seen here as a Luftwaffe Oberstleutnant. In addition to the *Ritterkreuz*, he also wears what appears to be the Finnish Order of the Lion at his throat



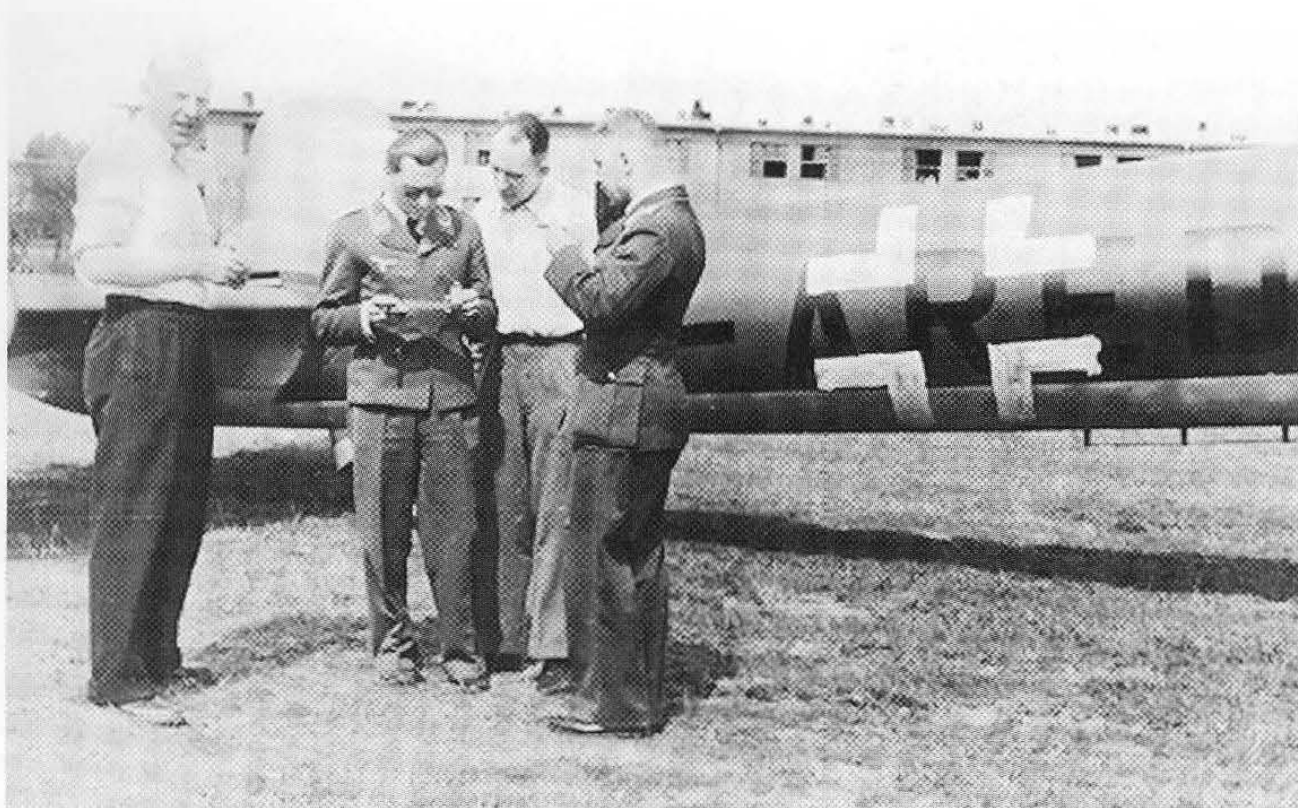
**15:** The Heinkel He 111V-4, W.Nr. 1968, D-AHAO, seen during flight tests. Finished in standard Luft-hansa colours and named Dresden, the aircraft was the first of three to be used for secret reconnaissance missions by the special duties Staffel of the RLM



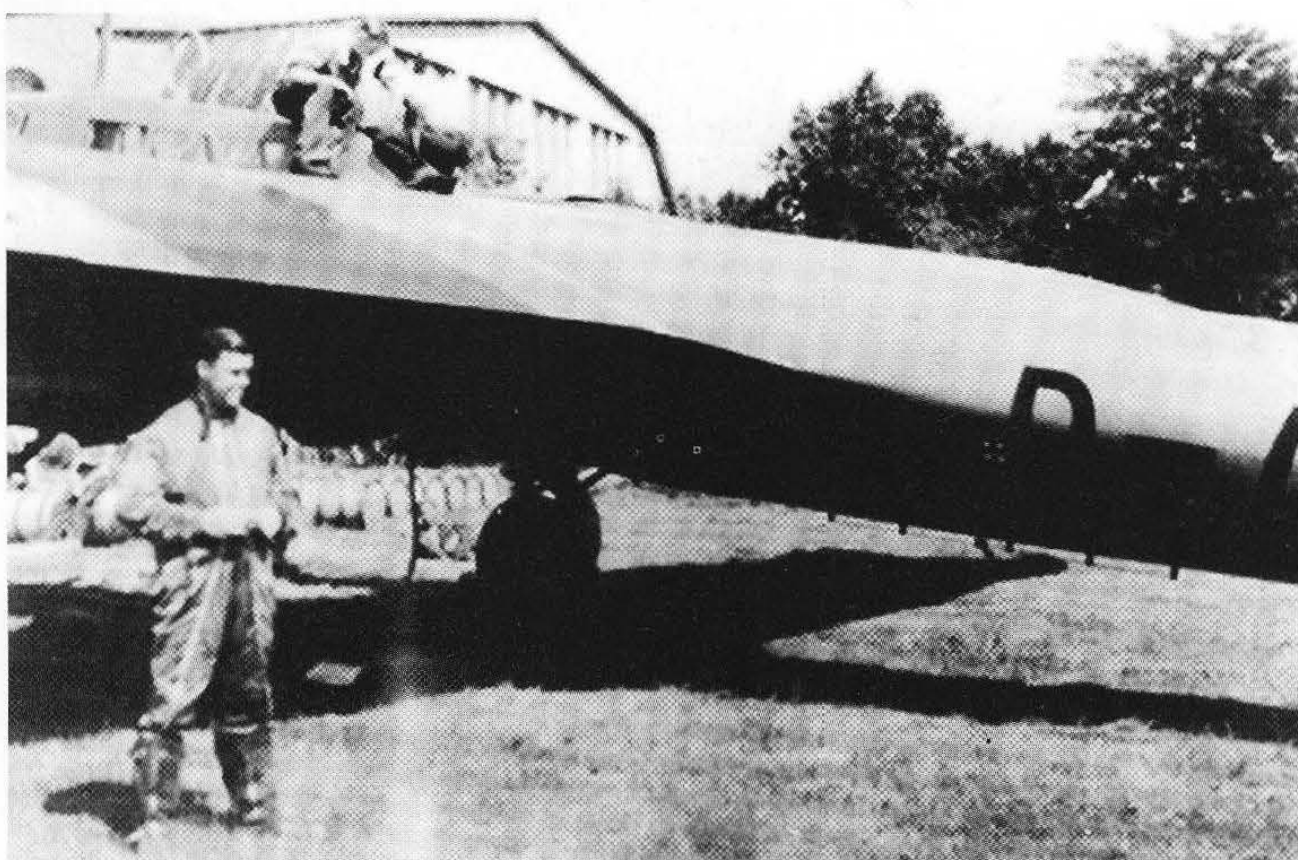
**16:** Yet another of the trio of ex-Lufthansa Fw 200s used by Rowehl's special unit. D-AETA was the V2, W.Nr. 2484, named Westfalen. It is seen here during a visit to Spain in 1938 on a transport flight while still in service with DLH. The onlookers all wear Legion Condor uniforms



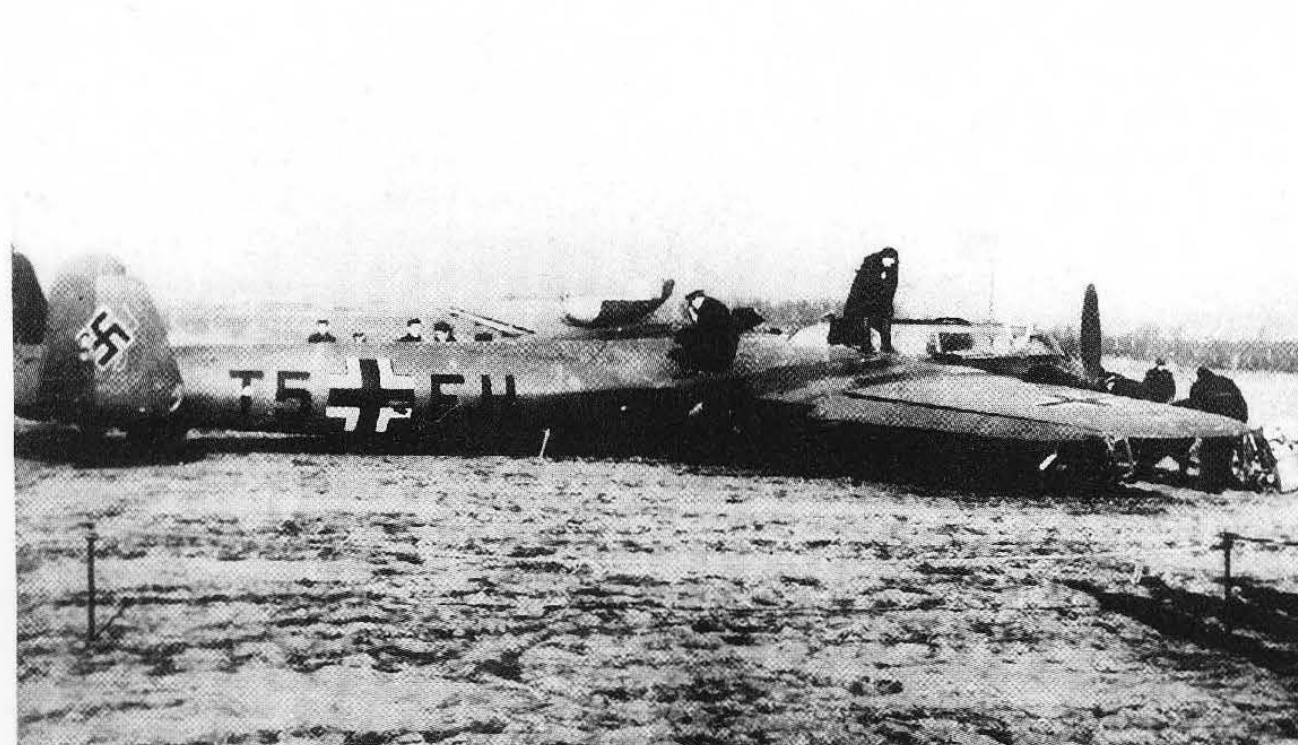




**17:** D-ARED is believed to be one of the three special Dornier 17S reconnaissance versions built especially for the Kommando Rowehl. The four crew members, two of whom are still in civilian clothes, are discussing the latest news reports in April 1941, as their aircraft receives a hastily-applied coat of yellow paint on the tail and Luftwaffe insignia for its part in the invasion of Yugoslavia and Greece. The unarmed Do 17S was essentially a mixture of a Do 17Z airframe with DB 601 in-line engines. Two Rb 50/30 and a single Rb 20/30 cameras were carried



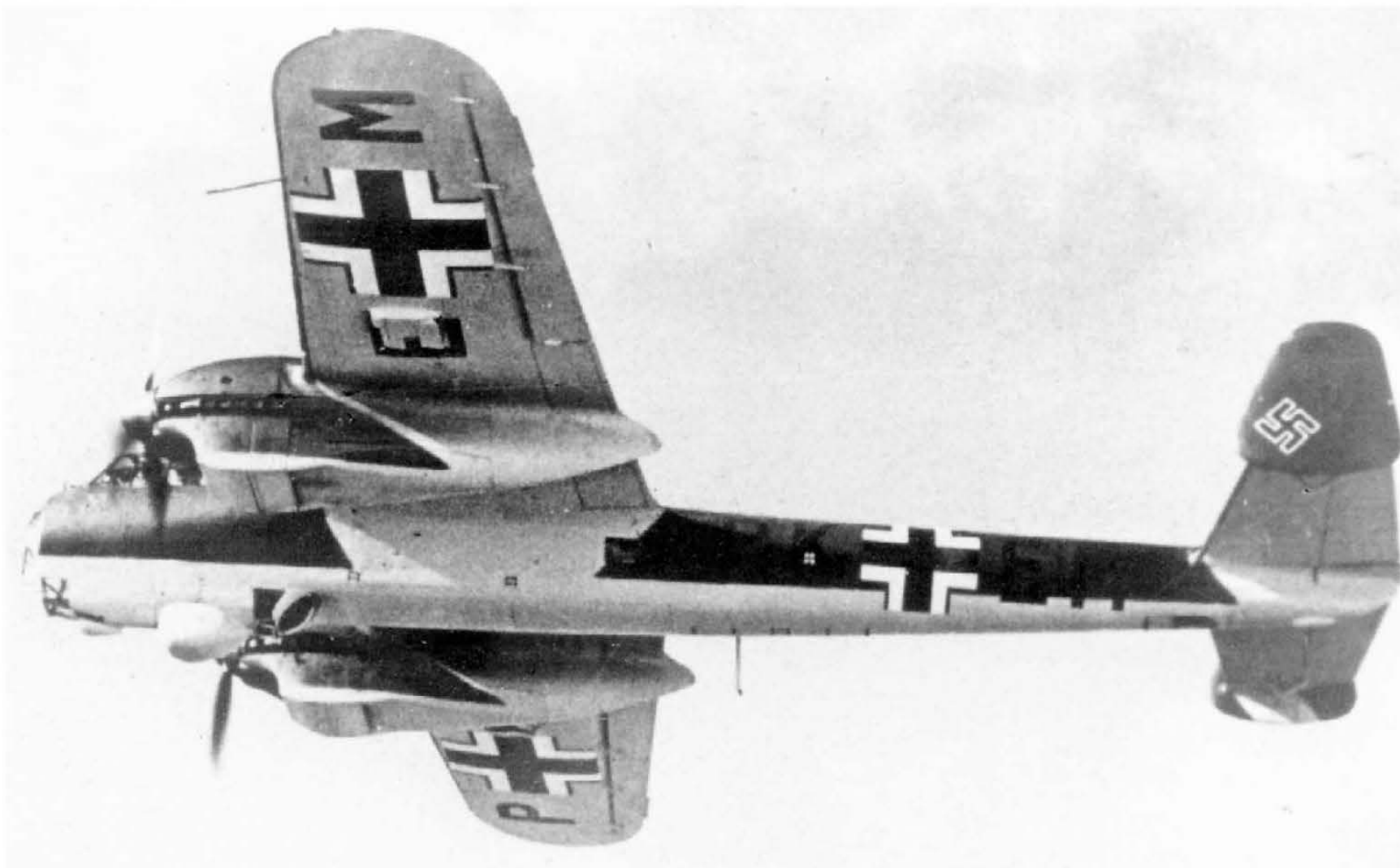
**18:** Another view of D-ARED (?), probably earlier in its career as it appears to be overall grey with black panels over the wing where exhaust stains would have occurred



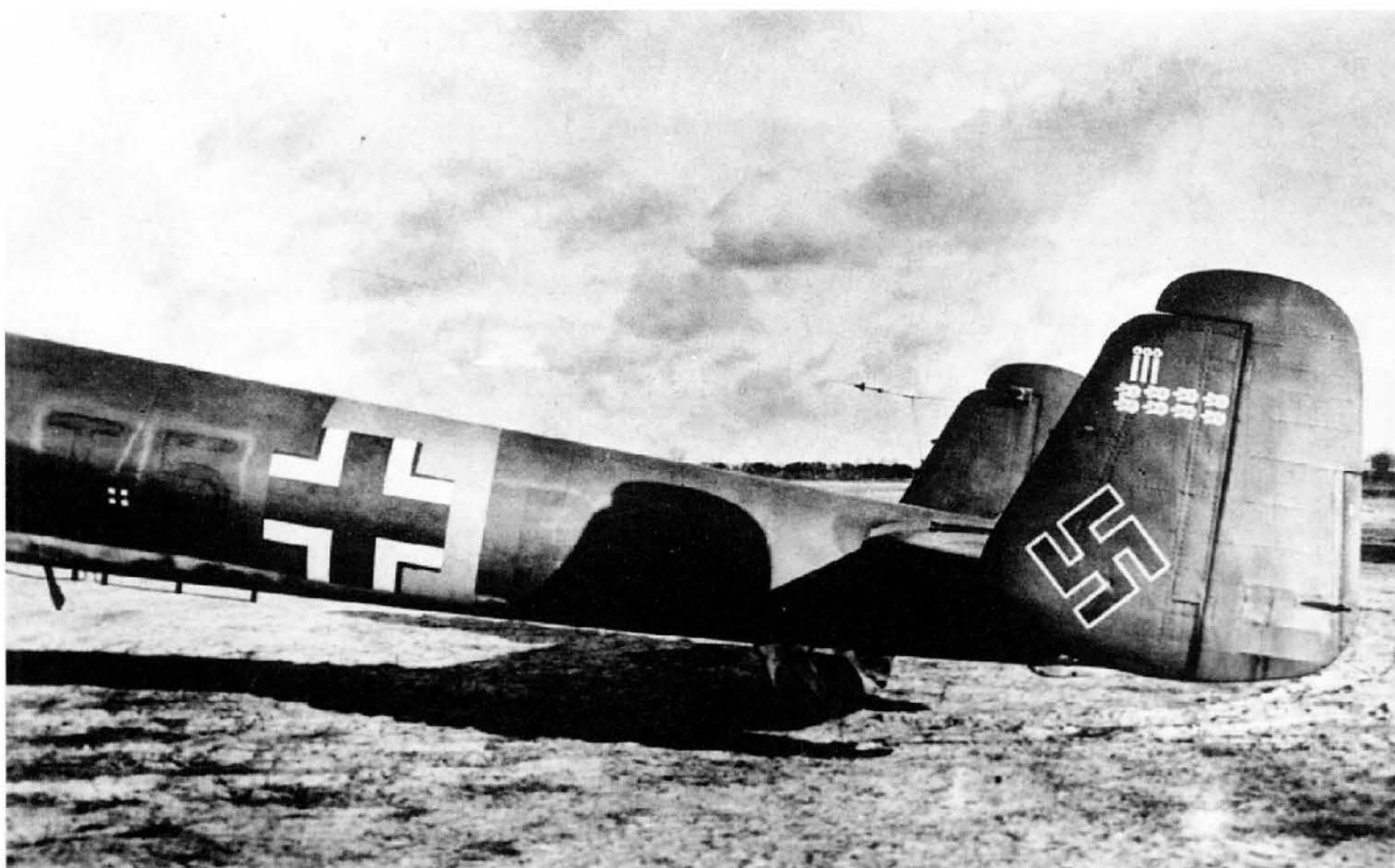
**19:** Another of the extremely rare Dornier 17S variants was shot down over France by two Curtiss Hawks of GC I/4 on 13 January 1940 while it was returning from a high-altitude mission over England. T5+FH was being flown by Lt de Res Theodor Rosarius, who escaped injury along with the rest of his crew. Rosarius later commanded the special trials unit known as the 'Zirkus Rosarius'. Note the overall RLM Grau finish to the aircraft and the black engine cowlings and panels over the wing



**20:** Dornier Do 215B-4 PK+EM shows off the bulbous fairing housing an Rb 50/30 camera under the nose. Finish and markings are typical for a bomber aircraft prior to delivery in the early part of the war



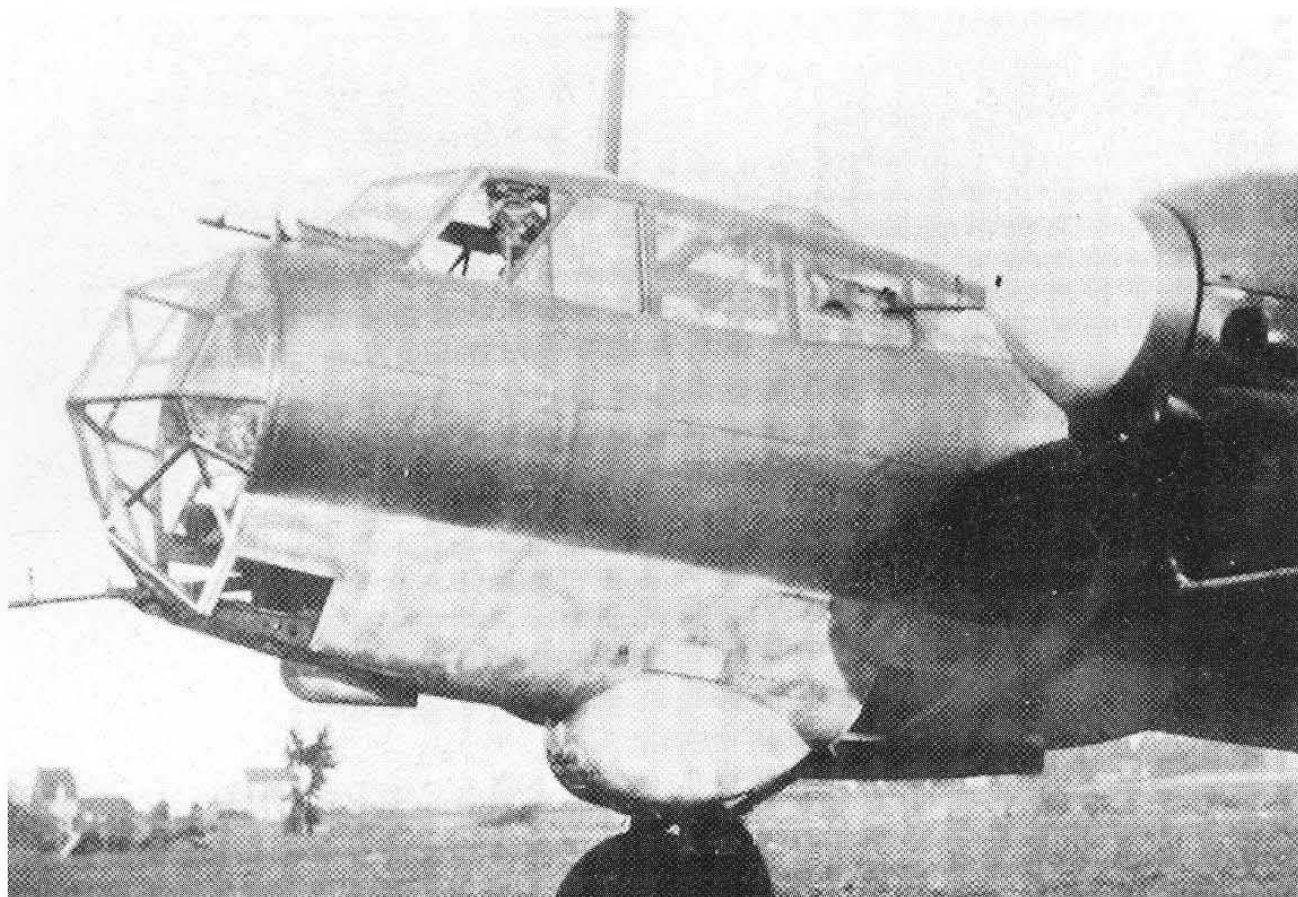
**21:** This close in view of a Dornier Do 215B, T5+PM, of the Aufkl.Gr(F)/Ob.d.L. shows eight mission markings in the form of balloons on the fin and three victory markings. The yellow fuselage band indicates use on the Eastern Front and the overspray around the code letters indicate that it has received a new identity at some time



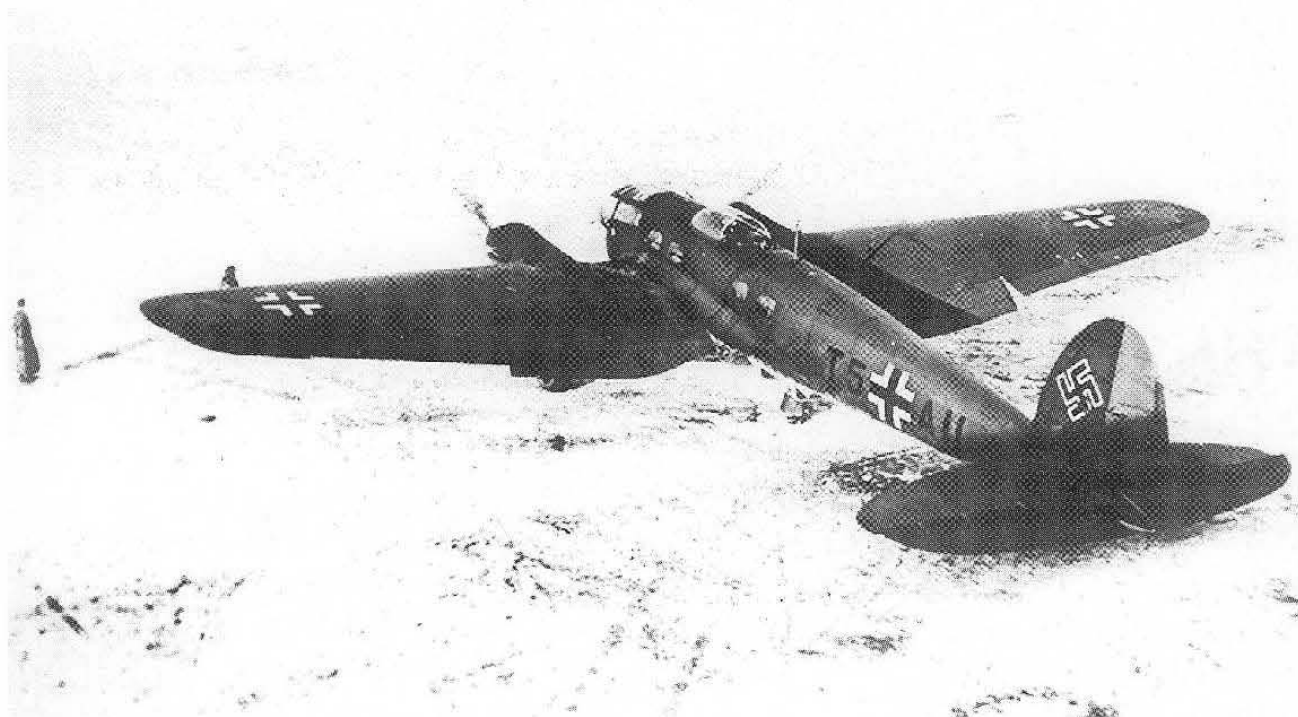
**22:** Ever-energetic, Rowehl was instrumental in prompting development of rare reconnaissance versions of standard aircraft. One such was the Dornier Do 217A, an example of which is seen here. The Do 217 series was a development of the Do 17Z bomber intended specifically for maritime operations, and culminated in several different variants, many of which could be equipped with guided missiles. Apparently, six A-0 reconnaissance versions were completed, but the Werk Nummer of only one, 2705, which went to the AufGr.(F)/Ob.d.L. in late July 1940 is known







**23:** A Dornier Do 215B-4 of 4.(F)/Aufkl.Gr.Ob.d.L setting out from Merville for a mission over the UK. The large fairing over the Rh50/30 camera and the unit-applied mottle to the undersides are worthy of note



**24:** It is a little-known fact that weather reconnaissance also came within the orbit of the Luftwaffe special service units. T5+AU is an He 111 of Wekusta 1/Ob.d.L., setting out on a lonely mission over the North Atlantic or towards Greenland in the winter of 1939-40. A number of Wekusta aircrew later served in KG 200 where their bad-weather flying skills were of great value



**25:** A winter-camouflaged Ju 88D, T5+I or LC, of the Aufkl.Gr.Ob.d.L., waits in a snowbound hangar, most probably at Stavanger in Norway, from where the unit ranged over northern England, Scotland, the North Sea and Iceland. The Ju 88s proved to be better able to protect themselves from Allied fighters than Heinkel 111s





## 1940 THE ABWEHR IN THE WEST Failure in England

By early 1940, thanks to some vigorous work by the British, most, if not all, of the agents already in the United Kingdom under the control of *Hptm* Herbert Wichmann, were under surveillance. In fact, 39 had already been apprehended and 'turned'. One of his most important agents, the Welshman, Alfred Owens, known to his German controllers as 'Johnny' had, in fact, been working for M.I.5, the British counter-espionage organisation, since the late 1930s. Known to M.I.5 by the code name 'Snow', he operated his radio to provide false information to the Abwehr on behalf of the 'Double-Cross' Committee, the body which actually controlled the activities of almost all the German operatives in Britain.

Before the outbreak of war, the Abwehr made provisional contacts with the Irish Republican Army which was planning a bombing campaign, begun on 16 January 1939. At the end of February a German agent, Oskar Pfaus, met the 'Army Council' of the IRA and, soon after the

war began in September, set up an IRA-Abwehr radio link. On 8 February of the following year Ernst Weber-Drohl was landed from the U-boat U 37 in Donegal Bay to assess the situation, but dropped his radio pack into the sea and, of course, was unable to communicate as he wished. He was arrested in April and quickly became a double-agent working for the British.

It was, however, clearly better to place agents as close as practicable to their intended destinations. As a result, the aircraft of the Aufkl.Gr. (F)/Ob.d.L. were to be used for clandestine flights to drop secret agents and saboteurs into Great Britain and the remaining neutral countries, some of these agents being recruited from the Lehr und Baukp.zbV 800. This new kind of operation, which required accurate navigation by night, was undertaken by the Gruppe Rowehl which seemingly prided itself on the precision of its navigation in the preferred cloudy weather conditions, claiming that night parachute drops were placed usually within 8 km of the intended position, but on some occasions they were wildly inaccurate. On the night of 5/6 May 1940, an aircraft under the command of *Hptm* Karl Edmund Gartenfeld, *Staffelkapitän* of the 3.Staffel, (who was responsible for dropping many of these agents into Ireland) was assigned to drop *Lt Dr* Hermann Goertz on the outskirts of Dublin which, in neutral Ire-

**26 Above:** The debris of war. Allied vehicles left abandoned on the seafloor at Dunkirk, shortly after the evacuation of the remnants of the BEF. A great number of these vehicles served with the Luftwaffe and the Wehrmacht for years afterwards. Enthusiasts may care to know that the vehicle on the extreme left is a French Renault AGR 4x2 4.5 ton cargo truck, used in large numbers by the French army. A Renault AFB ambulance can be seen in side profile



land, was not blacked-out. He parachuted to earth some 50 miles further north, in County Armagh, Northern Ireland; Dundalk was probably mistaken for Dublin, the drop being made in the correct position relative to the lights of the port.

In 1936 Goertz had been sentenced in Britain to four years imprisonment for espionage (an event which had led directly to the ban by Hitler on German spies in Britain) but had established a link with the outlawed IRA while serving his sentence in Maidstone Jail. His task in Ireland was to establish a German-run sabotage operation, independent of the fickle Irish terrorist organisation.

With great difficulty Goertz made his way south to Dublin where he succeeded in meeting the then IRA Chief of Staff, Stephen Hayes. Apart from relieving him of all his money, the IRA then did little else, finally betraying him to the authorities in November 1940. Goertz was imprisoned; he committed suicide while awaiting repatriation to Germany many months later, fearing he would be handed over to the British.

Meanwhile, also at the beginning of May, Sean Russell, an ex-Chief of Staff of the IRA, had arrived in Berlin from the United States at the instigation of the Abwehr. Russell and another Irish dissident, Frank Ryan, were intended to promote a more active sabotage role by the IRA. Russell and Ryan embarked for Ireland in a U-boat (U65) early in August in Operation TAUBE (Dove) but the vessel turned back when Russell died aboard of a burst stomach ulcer.

There was also a somewhat impractical plan for a peaceful German military move into Ireland (Operation KATHLEEN) in response to Irish fears that the British might invade during the spring of 1941, to occupy Lough Swilly and the airports at Shannon and Foynes. It was suggested that an invasion of Ireland could force Britain to sue for peace, allowing greater freedom in the planning for an invasion of the USSR. When the matter was put before Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop he proposed, subject to the Irish Prime Minister, Eamonn De Valera, showing interest, sending arms in ships that would head out from France into the Atlantic and then approach Ireland from the west, camouflaged as coming from the USA under the Irish flag. A negative reply from the Government of Ireland, who feared a rising by the IRA just as much as did the British, was received on 17 December 1940.

The plan for a partial 'peaceful occupation' of Ireland in concert with a secondary landing in Wales, remained a German option for some time, although extremely unlikely to be mounted without control of the sea and air. Operation KATHLEEN was apparently taken half-seriously by the Abwehr and the SS and at Oranienburg a No.1 SS Special Service Troop was formed, its members given a cover-story that they would prepare for a raid on the Suez Canal. In the event, links with the IRA proved to be valueless; IRA greed, unreliability and internal feuds saw to that.

Essentially, the Abwehr saw the dropping of agents into the Republic simply as a convenient means of pro-

viding them with easy access to the United Kingdom. Consequently Wilhelm Preetz was parachuted into Ireland in June but was soon arrested. Thereafter the Abwehr abandoned attempts to insert agents into Britain via the Irish 'back-door'.

Despite an earlier brilliantly successful campaign of agent insertion and recruitment combined with aerial reconnaissance, after the fall of France and with the collapse of German intentions in Ireland, Abwehr knowledge of British defences was limited to what could be discovered from aerial reconnaissance. The intelligence gathered was passed on to Fremde Heere West, whose collators were impressed at the information obtained.

As the plan for the invasion of England, SEELÖWE (Sealion), was developed, the lack of intelligence about the forces assembled for defence and their equipment became an increasing problem for the Oberkommando der Wehrmacht. The Abwehr, at that time still held in high esteem by the OKW, was therefore called in to remedy the lack of necessary tactical information for the proposed landings by means of placing agents on the ground. Consequently, the training and despatch of agents to Britain as 'Operation LENA' became a priority, although 'on an emergency basis' which meant that agent training was of the most elementary kind. Most were poorly motivated and spoke poor English (if they knew the language at all) but this was not considered important, the Abwehr anticipating that the agents would not need to be active for long in the field before the invasion began.

Published accounts of German espionage agents landed in England by sea and by air are not consistent; official and semi-official sources have claimed that all the agents were captured and either executed or 'turned' to work for the XX (Double-Cross) Committee and imitated by British radio-operators to give false information to the Abwehr but this 100 per cent success remains open to conjecture, for German and other sources imply that at least two agents were never detected. Several were landed by parachute at about the same time as the first failure of LENA on 3 September, when four Dutch volunteer agents were landed from a fishing boat on the Kent coast but were captured within 36 hours. Three were later executed in December. The stories of the Abwehr agents inserted into the United Kingdom at that time, as told in a variety of unofficial publications, vary considerably in their details and dates but the sequence of events typically went as follows:

Vertrauensmann (trusted agent) 3719, Goesta Caroli, carrying a radio, a Swedish passport and a British identity card, was dropped from an He 111 flying from Chartres on the night of 6 September to land near Denton, west of Northampton. He was arrested three days later and agreed to co-operate with the XX (Double Cross) Committee; this he did as 'Summer' (his British cover-name), operating for M.I.5 until the end of December 1940 when he tried to escape, subsequently being imprisoned until the end of the war.

On 19 September, Caroli's friend, Wulf Schmidt (Agent 3725) was dropped near Willingham, north of



Cambridge, from an He 111 piloted by *Hptm* Gartenfeld. Schmidt was picked up within a day and quickly agreed to co-operate with his captors. Under the British cover name 'Tate', he soon became one of the most valuable agents of the Abwehr — or so they believed. So valuable, in fact, he was awarded the Iron Cross — and British citizenship after the war.

Gartenfeld flew by night with Knemeyer to drop some of these Abwehr agents into Central and Southern England. Knemeyer wrote: "...one from Normandy to west of Bristol on a great moor where the famous English prison stood. The same night the bombers flew their big raid on Coventry's ball-bearing factories". If he recalled the date correctly, this was the night of 14/15 November when the old heart of Coventry was destroyed, causing some 1,100 casualties and destruction of 21 factories:

"Everything in Southern England was lit up by the searchlights looking for our bombers. Near Bristol we ran into heavy flak and were in the searchlights for a long time. Ruhnke was my observer. Gartenfeld flew with us to see the agents jump, and we had 'gondola' Do 17 or Do 217. I put one down from Brussels, in the Midlands near Birmingham; he was Norwegian. The one on Dartmoor was a South African student".

There is no British record of a South African agent being captured, but a man bearing a Dutch passport as Jan Willen ter Braak was believed to have been dropped at the end of October near Amersham, where his parachute is recorded as having been found on 3 November. He evaded capture and was able to communicate by radio with Abt Hamburg but was found dead, having been shot in the head ("by suicide" according to official British sources), in an air-raid shelter at Cambridge on 1 April 1941. In fact it is almost certain that he was a Soviet double-agent, murdered to prevent him betraying others of his kind at work in the UK.

At that time the rivalry between the Abwehr and the parallel intelligence service run by *SS-Sturmabführer* Reinhard Heydrich for *Reichsführer* Heinrich Himmler had not yet developed, although Heydrich's *Reichssicherheitshauptamt der SS* (State Security Administration of the SS) already doubted the loyalty of Abwehr senior officers and the reliability of their intelligence-gathering. *Oberst* Hans Oster, Canaris's deputy, told the Dutch Assistant Military Attache in Berlin, *Maj* Gijsbertus Jacob Sas, of the imminence of *WESERÜBUNG* but nothing was done when Sas passed the information on to the Norwegians. Oster's envoy to the Vatican, Dr Josef Muller, came under suspicion by Heydrich's SD (Security Service). Canaris, Oster and others took little trouble to conceal their opposition to Hitler's plans for a 'Greater Germany', presumably relying on the power of the OKW to protect them.

Their plan for peace involved the restoration of Poland and Czechoslovakia, the Sudetenland remaining in Germany, and for Austria to hold a plebiscite to decide its future. Canaris and *Gen* Franz Halder put the plan before *Gen* Walther von Brauchitsch, the *Befehlshaber*

*des Heeres* (Army C-in-C) but, lacking curiosity and foresight, the British Foreign Office refused to take the plan seriously.

Meanwhile three agents, Vera de Witte, a woman, Theodore Druecke and a Swiss, Werner Waelti, were flown by a Heinkel He 115 floatplane, possibly of Kü.Fl.Gr. 906, from Stavanger-Sola on the night of 30 September and set down in a rubber dinghy off the Scottish coast. They reached the shore near Portgordon on the coast of Banff but, because of their ineptitude, were soon arrested. Both men were executed in 1941. The woman was, in fact, already working for M.I.5. In a repeat of the operation a German agent, Otto Joost, and two Norwegians, Gunnar Edvardssen and Legwald Lund, were put down with their dinghy near Nairn on the Moray Firth on 25 October; they also were captured.

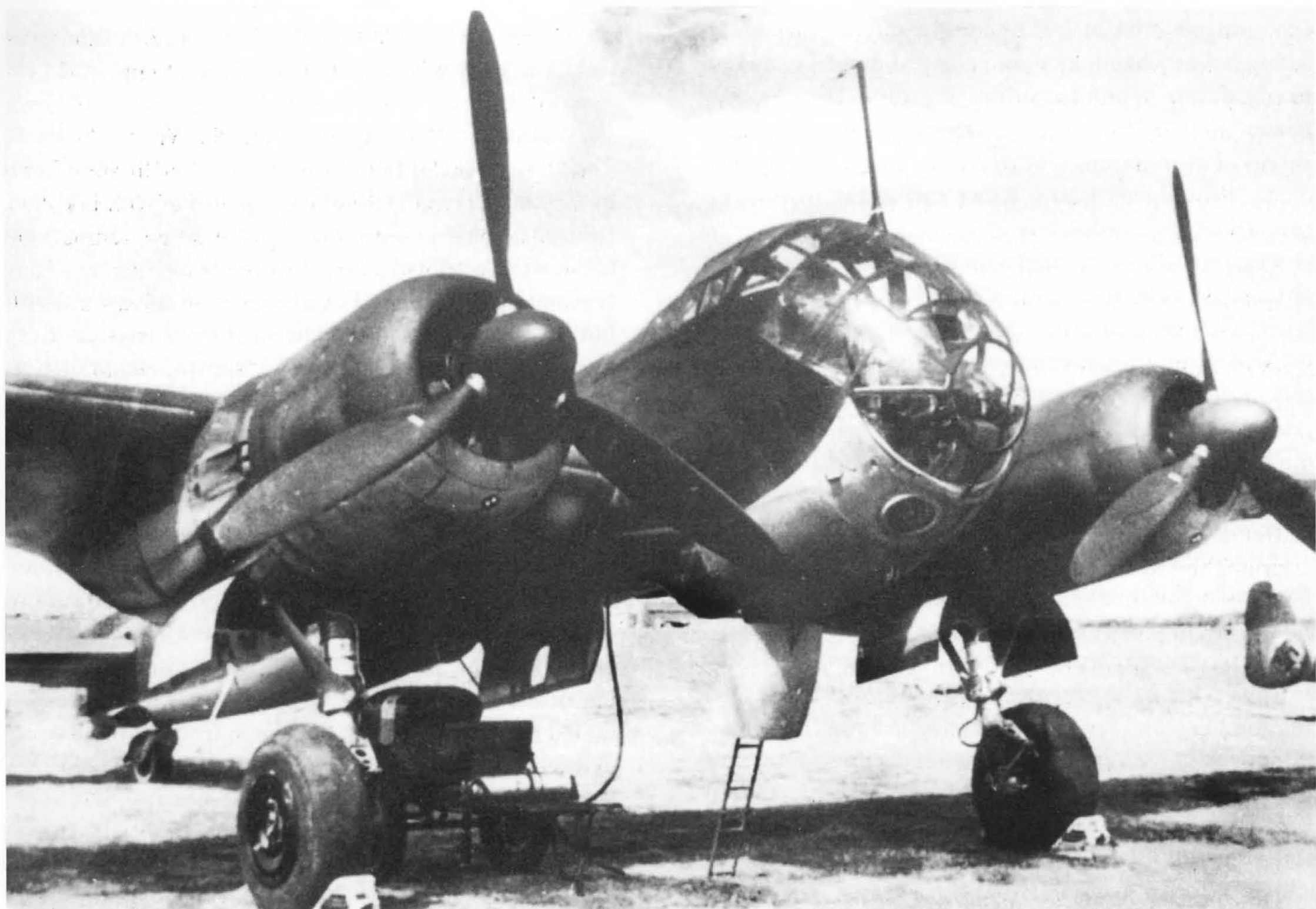
As has been shown, German agents came to Britain from a variety of backgrounds and for different reasons but almost without exception all were rapidly apprehended by the watchful British. Thereafter some were imprisoned; several were executed; a very few had determined to use this method to escape from German occupation. Most were 'turned' and put to use by their new masters under new cover names: 'Garbo', 'Hubert', 'Dragonfly', 'Gelatine', 'Celery', 'Mutt' and 'Jeff' among many others. All played their part, more or less willingly, in confounding the Abwehr's intelligence-gathering and sabotage efforts in Britain.

In fact a single German agent *did* survive at liberty until the end of the war. His final signal, in response to an urgent request for specific information, reached the Luftwaffe General Staff on 15 April 1945. It noted that RAF Balloon Command had been disbanded "as it was no longer needed..."

*27: An unidentified crew wait while their Do 215 is refuelled ready for the next mission. The man on the right is believed to be Oberst Josef 'Beppo' Schmid, head of the Luftwaffe's Intelligence Service. He was not a success in the post; his over-optimistic assessments of the state of the RAF during the Battle of Britain contributed greatly to the Luftwaffe's defeat in that campaign*







## 1941 SOUTH AND SOUTH-EAST The search for altitude

Throughout 1939 the crews of the Aufkl.Gr.Ob.d.L. undertook extensive trials of prototype aircraft suitable for their operations. By 1940 the Gruppe had developed into three Staffeln using various Ju 88 prototypes modified for photo-reconnaissance, these being supplemented by Dornier Do 215Bs and at least one Do 217A-0 aircraft in the 1. and 3. Staffeln and by Ju 86P-1 and P-2s, pressurised versions of the obsolete Ju 86 bomber, with higher aspect-ratio wings, more powerful, nitrous-oxide injected engines and automatic cameras mounted in the rear fuselage. Knemeyer found the Ju 86 unsatisfactory and the Jumo 207 diesel engines required too great an air/oxide mixture.

By the beginning of 1940 the 1. and 3. Staffeln were flying the Do 215B, a long-range development of the Dornier 17Z, originally intended for export, with an enlarged forward fuselage accommodating two vertical cameras, operating regularly over the Soviet Union. A fourth Staffel, with a cadre from the Aufkl.Gr.(F)/121, was added to the Gruppe in January 1941, made up largely of experienced test-pilots.

Early in the year Rowehl's formation received two pre-production Ju 88s; the V13, GU+AH, W.Nr. 880005

with standard Jumo engines and V14, D-APSF, W.Nr. 880006, with BMW 801 engines, the latter greatly preferred by the OKL and the aircrew. These aircraft were followed by other experimental Junkers 88s; the V23 NK+AO, W.Nr. 880023, and the prototype Ju 88B-0, the V24, W.Nr. 880024, aka D-ASGQ/NK+AP. All these early experimental aircraft carried factory codes, but at the end of the year operational trials were carried out by Ju 88s wearing unit codes. For example, the Ju 88B-0 V24, marked as K9+QH serving with the Aufkl.Gr.Ob.d.L., was lost over Sevastapol in the Crimea on 1 September, and the Ju 88B-0 V28, W.Nr. 880028, (GB+ND) was eventually lost, as T9+DH, in a crash at Brest on 14 August 1942.

In October 1939 a fourth, long-range, Staffel was incorporated from the 2./Aufkl.Gr. 121. Rowehl was interested in new machines such as the Henschel Hs 128, a

**28 Above:** Typical of the exotic aircraft used by Rowehl's unit is the prototype Junkers Ju 88B-0, W.Nr. 880024, seen here while still wearing the civilian code D-ASGQ. While it later received the Stammkennzeichen NK+AP, it was lost in Russia carrying the unit code K9+QH in September 1941. The finish here is the standard 70/71/65 bomber camouflage. Note the BMW trademark under the engine cowlings



high-altitude research aircraft, to test pressure-cabin systems and turbo-superchargers. He was so impressed with its potential that he urged further development. The resulting Hs 130A reconnaissance version could easily reach 15,240 m altitude but some disappointing performance figures and engine problems caused the project to be abandoned without Rowehl ever getting to use it. The first five prototypes were delivered to Echterdingen for operational trials and sporadic improvements, such that two years later an Hs 130A-O/U6 with a two-man crew and two cameras reached 15,500 m. By that time other types were given a higher priority.

The 4. Staffel operated over the Soviet Union from Bucharest and Cracow with Ju 86Ps early in 1941, but when Hitler launched his attack on Russia the first three Staffeln of Rowehl's Gruppe moved to the Eastern Front, returning the 4. Staffel to the west to continue high level activities in June 1941 from Rangsdorf. The 4.(F)/Ob.d.L. was still equipped with five Ju 86Ps. On 28 August one of one of these Junkers bombed Bristol and other towns in south-western England. A last offensive flight was made over Kent on 9 September, after which the weather broke and brought operations to an end. Meanwhile a number of Ju 86Ps were transferred to the 2.(F)/123 at Kastelli-Peliados in Crete. With their crews went Knemeyer.

For the researcher the nomenclature of the clandestine Luftwaffe formations can be highly confusing. Apart from the attribution of aircraft to various operations, even identification of the aircraft unit codes is often difficult. Parts of the same units were disbanded then re-formed, often with the same commanders and the same aircrew and aeroplanes. Often there is no apparent operational reason for such changes evident from remaining records and Orders of Battle.

## Agents, East

Less than a year after signing the Non-Aggression Pact with the USSR, Hitler declared his intention of attacking the Soviet Union. He made it clear that he regarded the area of the 'General-Gouvernement' (occupied Poland) principally as an assembly area for his forces before they advanced. A story has been told of an occasion when Ribbentrop, the German Foreign Minister, was presented by the other members of the Nazi hierarchy with a cabinet containing copies of the Agreements that he had negotiated with other countries; his peers were highly amused because every one of the Pacts had been broken by Hitler.

As early as July 1940 Hitler set the middle of September as the date of readiness for a ten-day count-down for the invasion of Southern England. The preliminaries to SEELÖWE began immediately with attempts to obtain air superiority over the Channel. Air attacks were made on the Channel ports and convoys of coastal shipping in the expectation that British fighters would be drawn into battle. These attacks continued into August when, on the 12th, the Luftwaffe began a series of devastating attacks on radar installations and airfields in the South of England. On 15 August the full availability of the Luftwaffe

was used in 'Adlertag' (Eagle Day), when more than 1,750 sorties were flown at the beginning of a series of air attacks intended to destroy the RAF in what became known as the Battle of Britain.

The bombing of London brought a retaliatory raid on Berlin which caused Hitler to demand continuous bombing of London, thereby easing the pressure on RAF Fighter Command at a most fortuitous moment. By mid-September the daylight battle reached its climax with Luftwaffe losses mounting, particularly of the most experienced aircrew, and the Luftwaffe suffered its first failure to achieve air superiority.

On 13 September Hitler told his commanders that, because of the state of the air battle, the date of SEELÖWE must be delayed until the end of the month. Postponed yet again, preparations were maintained for an invasion in October, but on the 12th Hitler again postponed the operation until an indefinite date in the spring of 1941. In fact, preparations for SEELÖWE continued only as a cover for his plan FRITZ, the long-planned invasion of the Soviet Union, soon to be re-named BARBAROSSA, and the first move towards that operation came on 11 September when a German mission was sent to Romania.

By early 1941, the Aufkl.Gr./Ob.d.L. had undertaken more than 500 over-flights recorded by the Soviet authorities, but orders were given to refrain from shooting at the German aircraft. Early in 1941 aircraft of the 1. Staffel operating from Cracow in Poland, the 2.(F)/Ob.d.L. from airfields in Romania and Bulgaria, and the 3. Staffel at Hamina in Finland, stepped up their reconnaissance in preparation for BARBAROSSA, planned for 22 June. On 21 June a re-organised 4.(F)/Ob.d.L. based at Berlin-Rangsdorf was given the task of operating in the West with various aircraft, including Ju 86Ps.

Theodor Rowehl's long-range air group had begun reconnoitring the Soviet Union in 1934. His twin-engined aircraft, fitted with extra fuel tanks and flying at heights up to 9,144 m, photographed the naval port of Kronstadt and nearby Leningrad, the industrial areas of Pskov and Minsk in western Russia, and the Black Sea naval port of Nikolayev. The coverage of Kronstadt, which furnished a sequence of pictures of warships at intervals of several weeks, provided valuable data about the rate of Soviet naval construction. The other pictures seem to have yielded mainly intelligence about Russian factories.

At the start of September 1940 Hitler, apparently not wanting to anger Russia just as he was girding up for his invasion of Britain, ordered a stop to all aerial reconnaissance against the Soviet Union. The ban lasted a month but the Army pressed for pictures and early in October, after he had postponed his cross-Channel invasion and had begun to regard the conquest of Russia as a means of forcing England's surrender, Hitler rescinded the order. He now allowed flights to a depth of almost 321 km into the Soviet Union from the borders of East Prussia and German-occupied Poland. At once the German machines began over-flying the Russian border and again the Russians began spotting them. On 6 January 1941, for example, one



crossed the Soviet frontier, flew to a depth of about 24 km, and then paralleled the border for almost 161 km before returning to Germany. On 3 March the commander of the Red Navy ordered that such craft be shot down. On 17 and 18 March two were fired on over the Latvian port of Liepaja; others soon appeared north-west of the Black Sea. Later Stalin countermanded the navy's order, apparently to avoid provoking the Germans, and directed that such planes be forced to land instead.

By that time, increasing activity by RAF night-fighters was making low-level flying across the Channel and the North Sea extremely hazardous. Only two agents were landed by parachute in England early in 1941; Josef Jakobs on 31 January, Karl Richard Richter in Hertfordshire on 14 May. Both refused to co-operate with M.I.5 and were executed later in the year.

On 15 April 1941, while on a photographic reconnaissance from Cracow to the Zhitomir area of Byelorussia, a Ju 86P carrying the civilian marking D-APEW was compelled to reduce height through engine failure. Near Rovno in Russian-occupied Poland, the Junkers was intercepted by a Soviet fighter which opened fire and destroyed the port engine. The Junkers pilot, *Uffz* Schnetz, was able to put the aircraft down and he and his observer, *Uffz* Walther, set explosive charges to destroy the cabin and camera installation but they were unable to determine if the cameras had been destroyed before they were arrested.

After initial interrogation they were taken to Rovno and handed over to the GPU, the political intelligence agency, for interrogation. Their original cover story was that they had crossed the frontier whilst flying by instruments from the *Versuchsfliegerschule* (Test-pilot school) at Cracow but when it became clear that their interrogators believed there had been others aboard the aircraft — the earlier Ju 86D carried a crew of four — the pilot and observer stated that a Russian and a Ukrainian had parachuted from the aircraft. Schnetz claimed that one of these men had set the blind-flying course from Cracow. After the beginning of Operation Barbarossa on 22 June, Schnetz was told that he would be hanged or shot. He and Walther were to be moved to another prison but during the immediate confusion of the Soviet retreat they were abandoned by their captors, picked up by advancing German infantry and returned to be met by Rowehl in Warsaw.

The flights increased in number. In the three weeks between 27 March and 18 April, the Russians detected an average of more than three a day. On 4 April, for example, they spotted a plane at 7,010 m that violated the border near Przemyśl at 13.20 hrs and penetrated 120 km into Russian-occupied territory before flying back to Germany at 13.50 hrs. They had no illusions as to what the reconnaissance was for.

From mid-April to mid-June, the flights became more systematic and remained at about the same rate of three a day. These mainly served to update older photographs, dating from May and October 1940, of Russian fortifications. The priority for the new pictures ran from close to

the Russo-German line of demarcation, the most urgently desired, through the areas around Rovno and Lutsk in western Russia and, last of all, to Kiev in the interior. Some 300 mm square photos from 4 April 1941, showed artillery emplacements, antitank trenches, and field fortifications in Soviet-occupied south-east Poland around the small towns of Bobrówka, Wolka Zapałowska and Buczyzna.

None of this contributed much to the overall estimation of the size of the Red Army, by revealing the number and size of its camps, or of the industrial potential of the Soviet Union, by disclosing its total acreage. The size of the country precluded anything approaching complete coverage. So the Rowehl group provided some details of economic intelligence, additions to bomber target folders, and indications that the Russian roads were better than the Germans had thought, but mainly operational and tactical information about Russian fortifications in the expected path of the German armies.

The preparations for FRITZ/BARBAROSSA were well under way before the daylight attack phase of the Battle of Britain had become the night 'Blitz'. In March 1941 a programme of airfield construction was accelerated by the General-Gouvernement — the possession of Poland having been an essential for providing bases for Hitler's long-term intention of destroying Stalin's 'evil empire'. During the first weeks of June 1941, over 2,700 aircraft were moved eastwards — more than 700 of them reconnaissance types.

Despite the British Government's antipathy towards the Soviet Union, the Kremlin was warned — a delicate operation because the knowledge was based on 'Ultra' decrypts — of an invasion by their German 'ally', the Red Army still appears to have been taken by surprise when BARBAROSSA began on 22 June. As in Poland, the first assault of the new campaign included continuous low-level daylight attacks, of Soviet airfields. By midday some 1,200 aircraft of the Red Air Forces were out of action and the Luftwaffe went over to acting as 'long-range artillery' for the Army ground forces and providing continuously updated tactical aerial photography.

The German offensives continued through the heat of the summer, but the weather broke in late October. Heavy rain and consequent mud in a land with few metalled highways brought Hitler's forces to a halt short of Moscow, just as with Napoleon's army 129 years earlier. Despite the severity of the winter now to follow, the Soviets launched a major counter-offensive on 5 December. At Demyansk, midway between Leningrad and Moscow, 100,000 German troops were cut off and a huge airlift by Ju 52s was begun to supply them. The Red Army pressure continued until April 1942 when mud effectively brought both sides to a halt. In the south-east the German objective was the oilfields of the Caucasus, for which possession of the Crimea and Sevastapol was essential. By mid-July Sevastapol was in German hands.

While the German Army Groups were fully occupied, the Abwehr no longer paid great attention to the United Kingdom for British forces were committed in Africa and



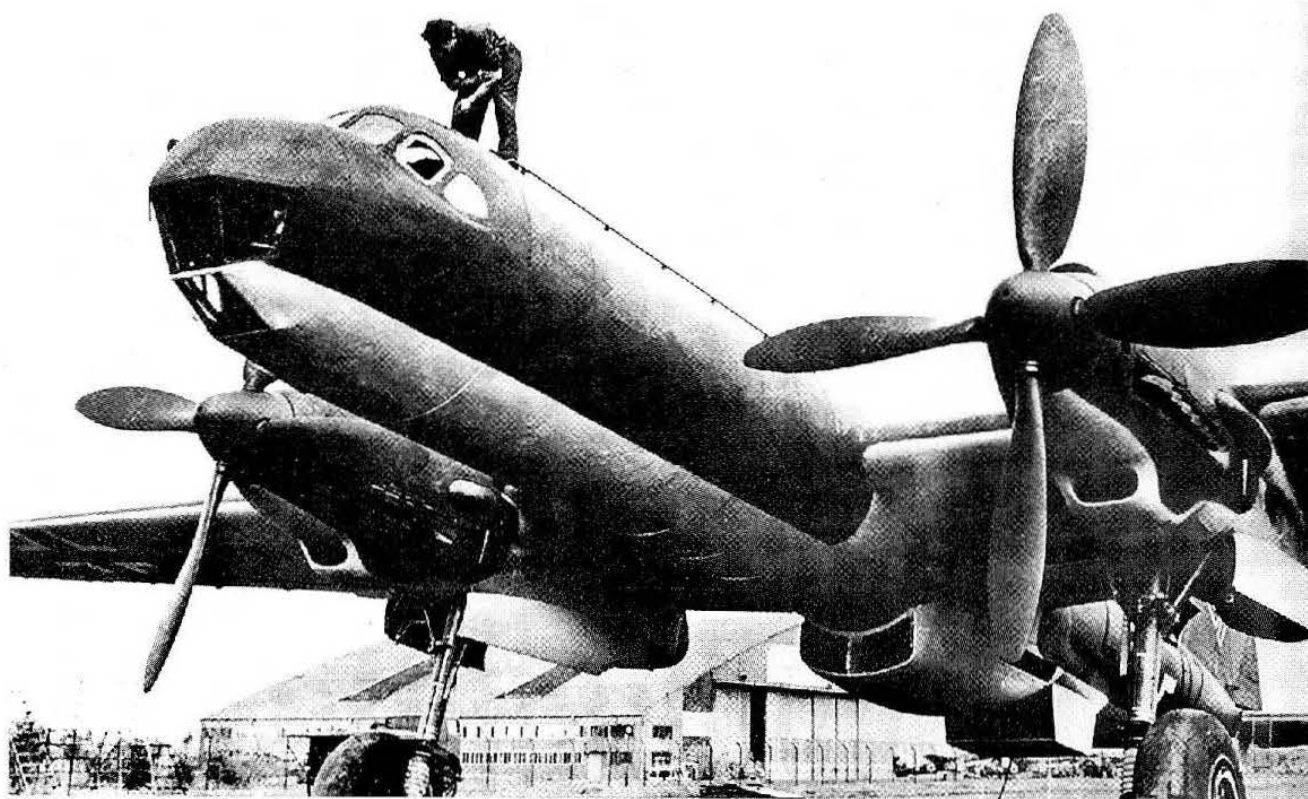
the Middle East. A build-up of American forces promised further developments so operations over Britain remained on reconnaissance and the Kommandos maintained their programmes of agent insertions beyond the fighting fronts. The principal German interest remained on the Eastern Front; the movement and location of Red Army formations.

From the beginning of 1942 in Britain, communists were agitating with the slogan 'Second Front Now', although no overall strategy had been agreed between the Allies. In August, Churchill flew to meet Stalin in Moscow and agreement was reached (largely to Britain's military disadvantage) on the great quantities of materials to be provided for the Russians to hold back the German Armies. This they slowly did with operation WATERSTORM in the south-east where the only remaining German force was Gen Paulus's 6. Army 'marooned' at Stalingrad. On 3 February 1943, Stalingrad fell to the Red Army and Hitler declared four days of national

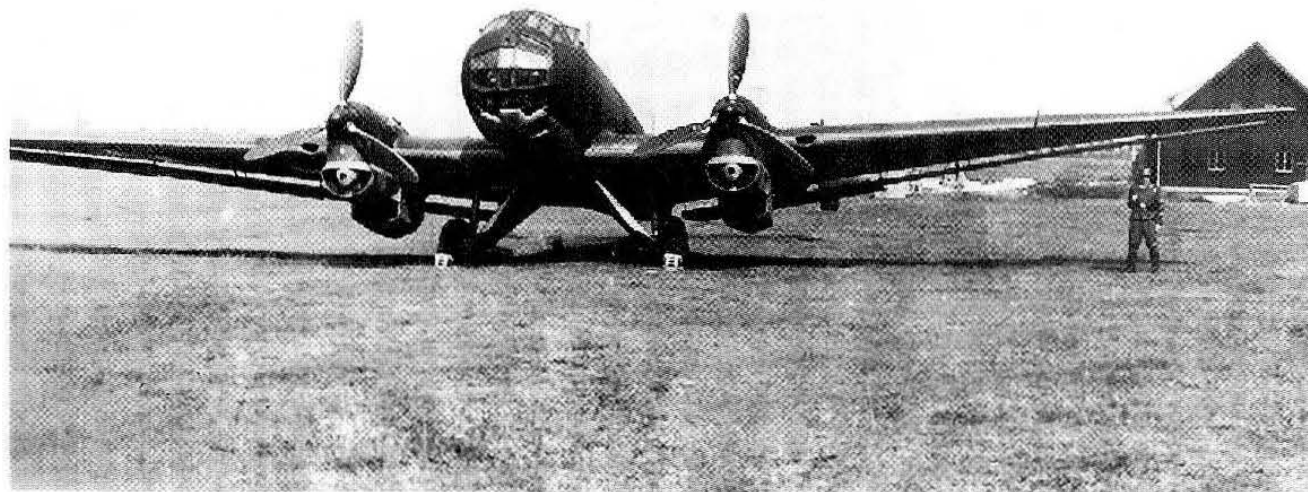
mourning. His armies were compelled to withdraw further and were faced with more disasters at the western end of the Mediterranean Sea where Tunis and Bizerta were taken by General Alexander's 18th Army Group on 7 May. There the Axis armies suffered losses equal to those at Stalingrad: 60,000 dead and wounded, 240,000 taken prisoner. Alexander signalled Churchill: "We are masters of the North African shore"; the way was open for an invasion of Sicily and for landings on the Italian mainland.

In the East the Germans launched another offensive in July, seeking to 'straighten' a salient in the Soviet line at Kursk on the Central Front, but by mid-August their attempt had failed and the Red Army continued pressing to the West. A to-and-fro series of offensives began and a drive early in May 1944 took the Russians 322 km into the Ukraine. On 7 May they began a decisive assault on Sevastapol; five days later the last German troops had been evacuated from the Crimea.

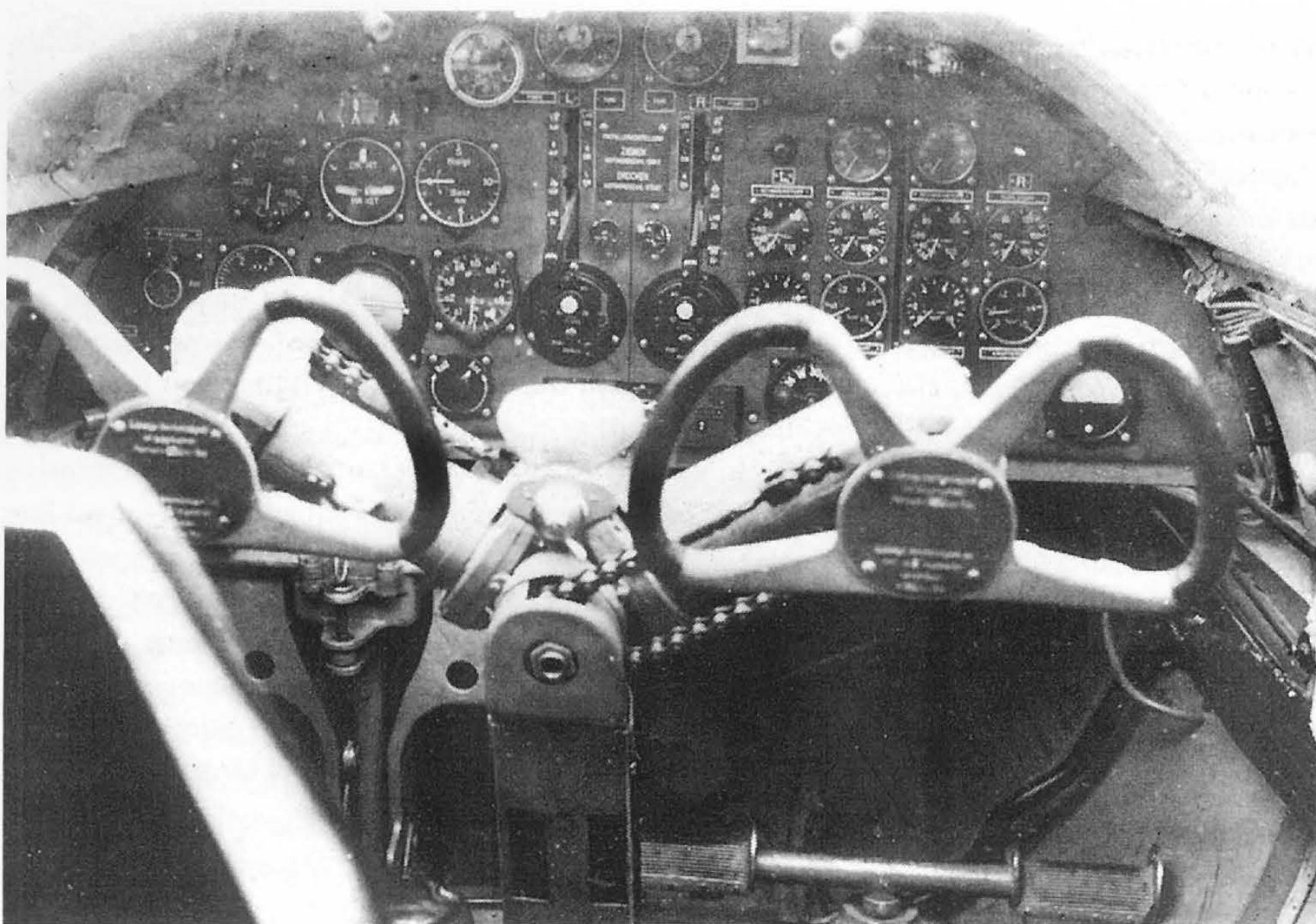
**29:** This is one of the seven Henschel Hs 130E-0 prototype high-altitude reconnaissance aircraft ordered. CF+OZ, W.Nr. 0054, was undergoing trials of the HZ-Anlage engine installation, probably at Johannistal in early 1943. Note the massive propellers and the pressure cabin. Despite Rowehl's enthusiasm, constant engine problems meant that the aircraft was never able to fulfil its expectations and so never entered Luftwaffe service



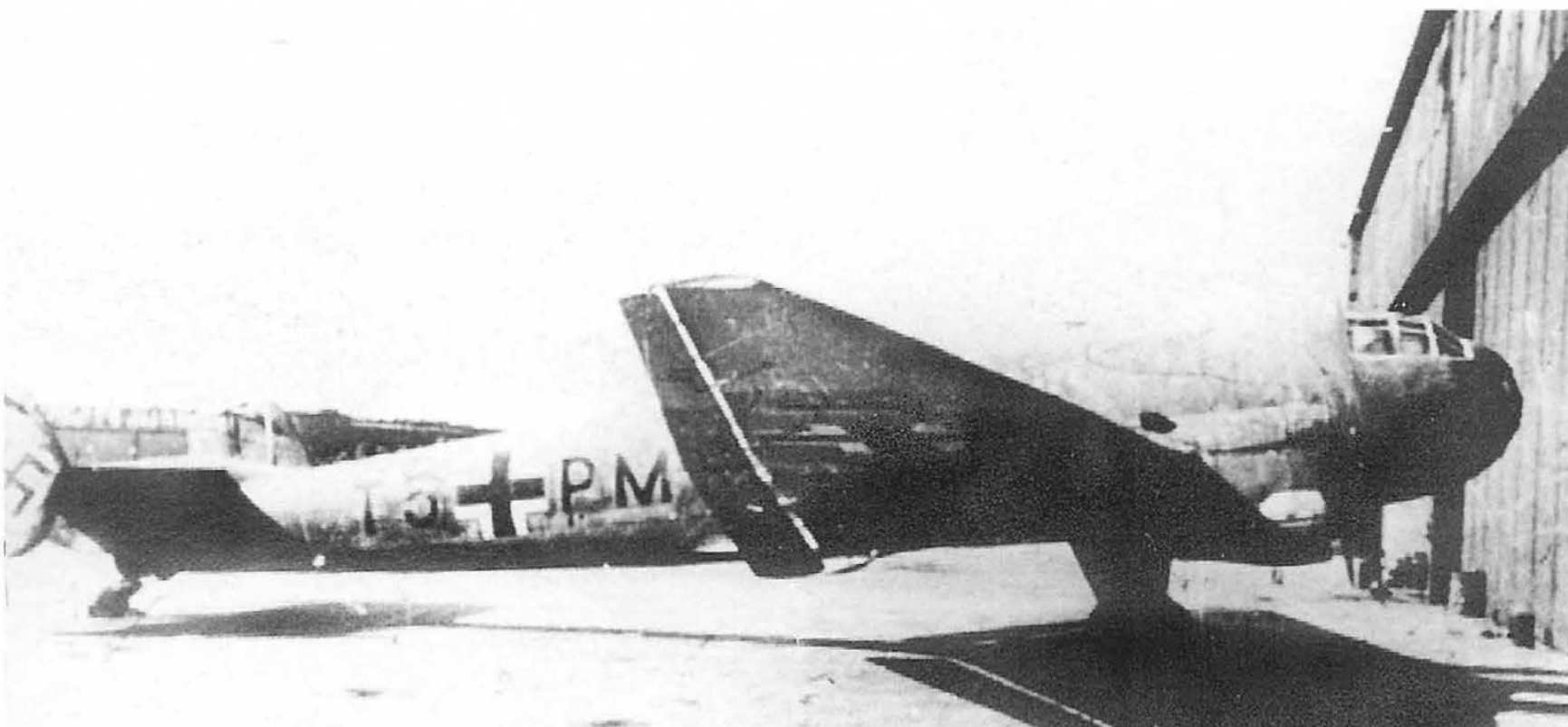
**30:** A far more useable machine for the Luftwaffe's reconnaissance crews was the Junkers Ju 86P, a 1940's equivalent to the Lockheed U-2. Almost invulnerable to fighters, this unidentified aircraft under armed guard is typical of those which carried out much of the strategic reconnaissance over Russia and in the Middle East



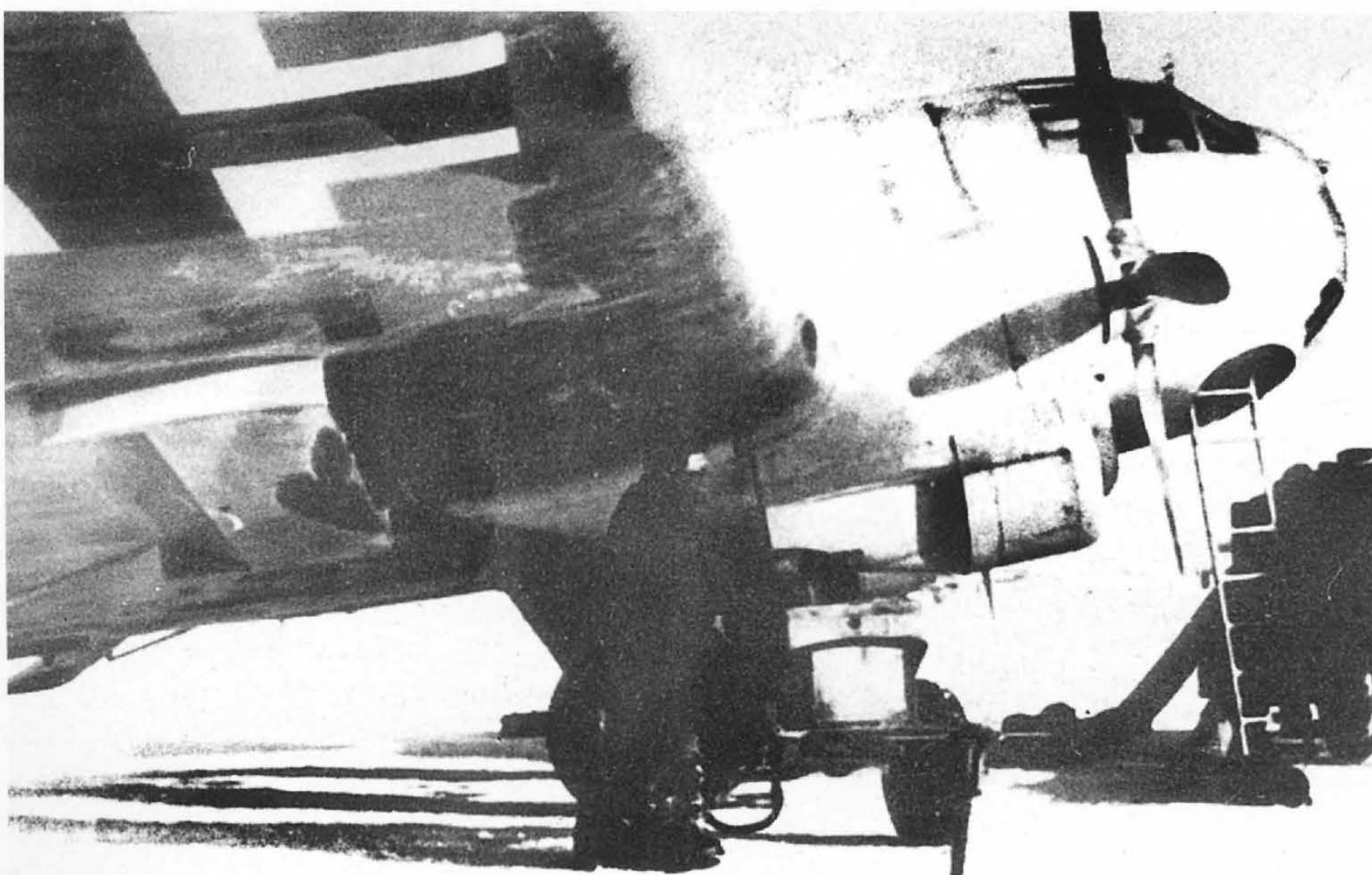




**31:** The remarkably spartan cockpit of the Junkers Ju 86P. Note that the interior colour is mostly shades of grey



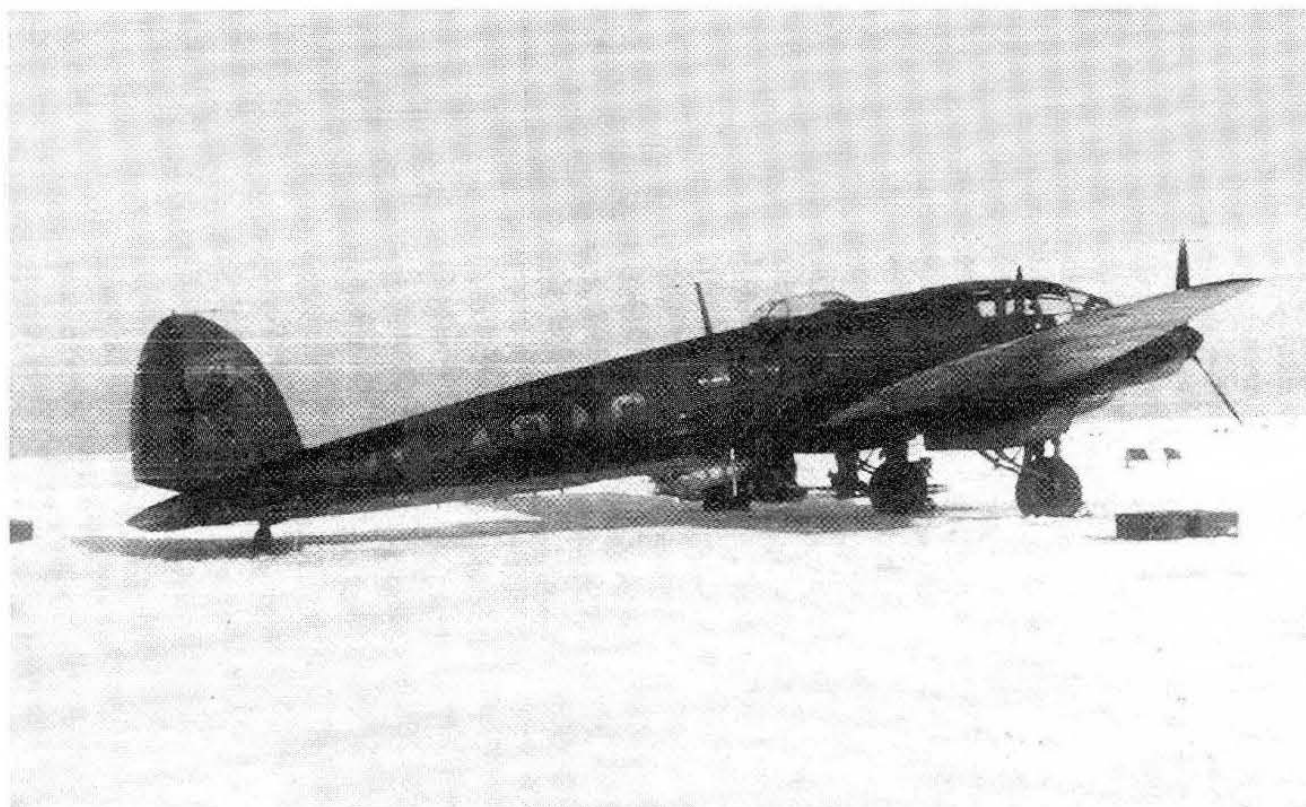
**32:** T5+PM is a Junkers Ju 86P of the 1./Versuchsstelle für Höhenflüge, possibly in the Middle East. The aircraft shown here may be W.Nr. 0498 which crashed at Böskum on 21 December 1942, sustaining 95 per cent damage. One other Ju 86P, W.Nr. 0292, T5+??, is also known to have been operated by the unit in January 1942. Note the overall light colour



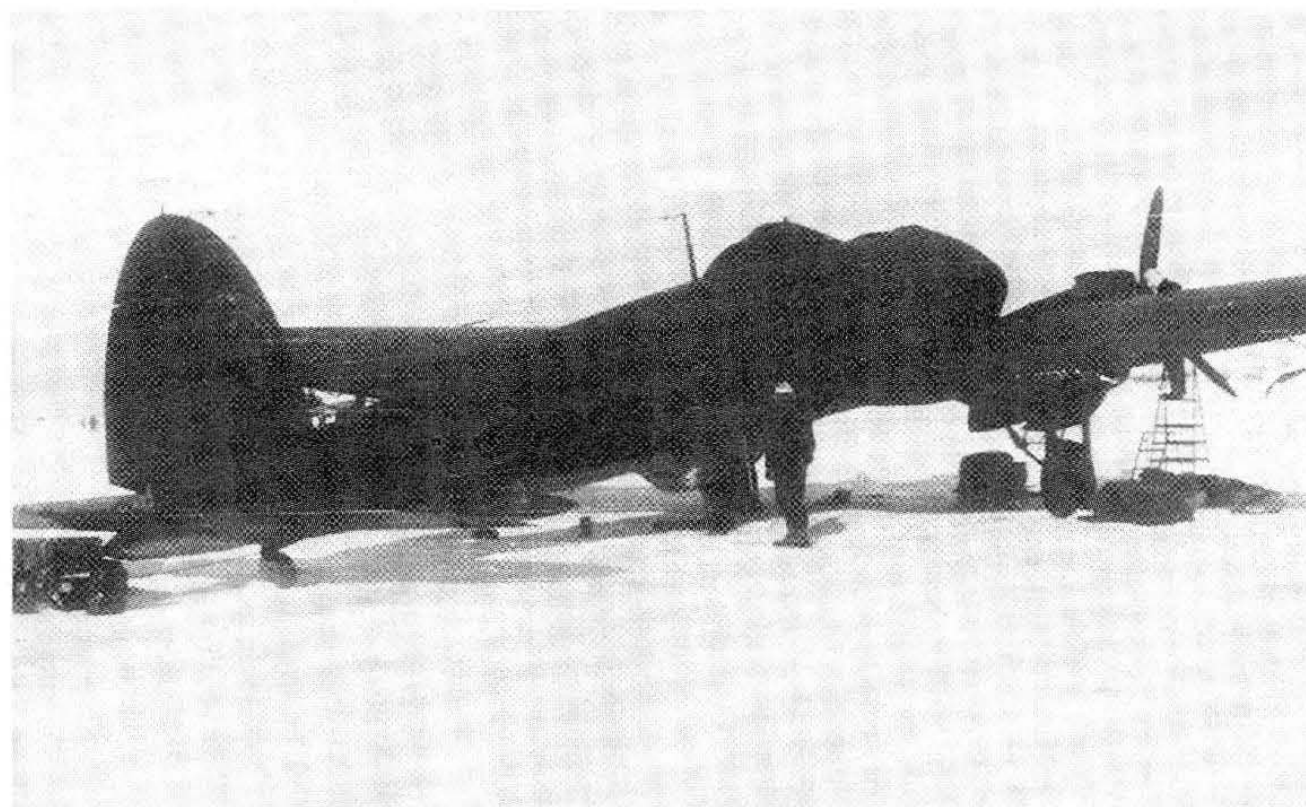
**33:** A light grey or blue Ju 86R-1, of the 1./Versuchsstelle für Höhenflüge (VfH), probably in the winter of 1942-43. At the time the unit had two examples on strength: W.Nr. 0454, T5+RM, and W.Nr. 0285, T5+WB. W.Nr. 0454 was later re-coded T5+VH. It is not known which one is shown here



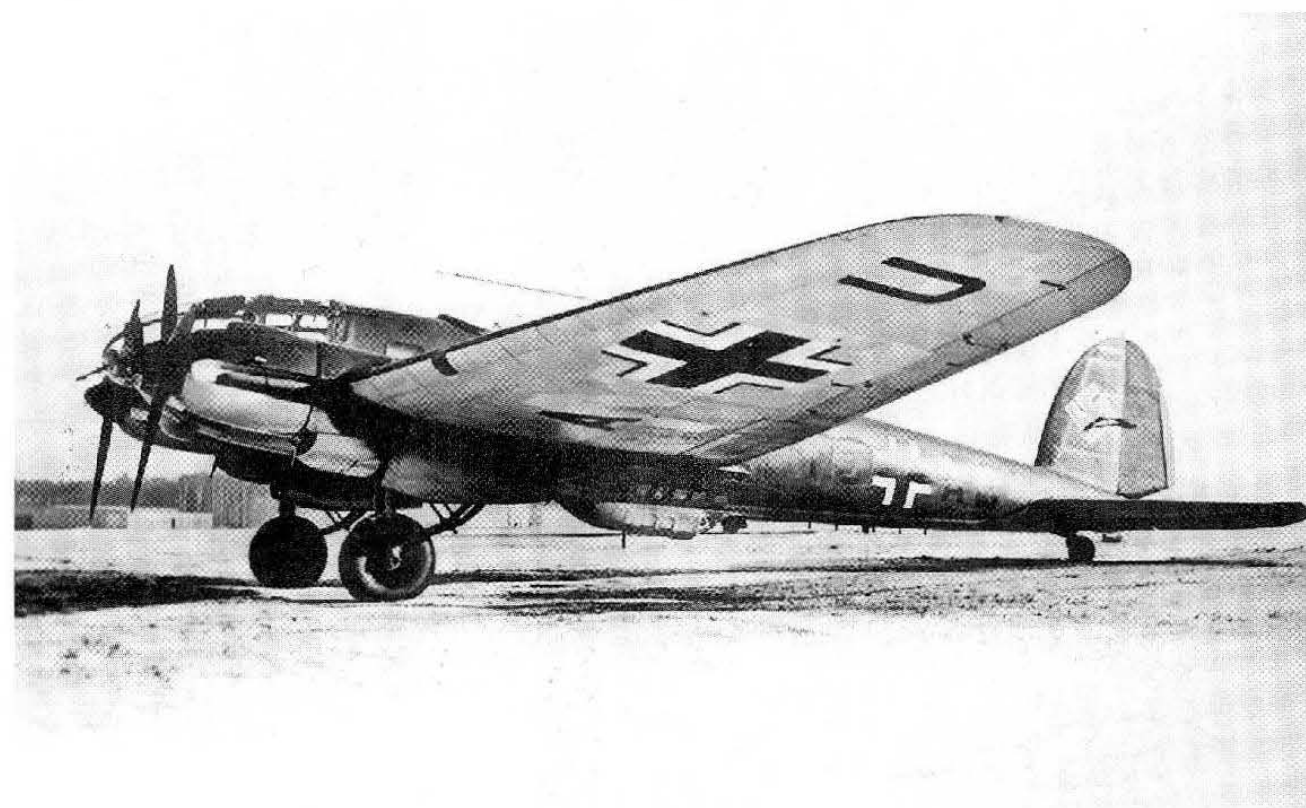
**34:** Wearing a coat of overall temporary Black 22 camouflage on its upper surfaces, this Heinkel He 111 with the civilian code D-ADAG was used by Rowehl's special unit for clandestine reconnaissance over the Soviet Union during 1940 and early 1941



**35:** Another view of He 111 D-ADAG undergoing engine maintenance, presumably during the winter of 1940-41. The remnants of the pre-war civilian-style presentation of the swastika can be clearly seen under the temporary black paint



**36:** Another view, a year earlier, of He 111, T5-AU, (see page 22) used by Wekusta I./Ob.d.L., reveals the huge underwing code letters and small crosses used at the beginning of the war, now overpainted by more suitably pro-portioned operational markings







*37: Yet another of the exotic aircraft tried out for high-altitude reconnaissance was the Arado Ar 240A-0, T9+GL. Seen here in use with 3./Erp.Gr.O.b.d.L., the light colour and white outline fuselage cross are typical for late March 1944 when this picture was taken at Oranienburg. The aircraft was destroyed in a crash in Poland later that year*

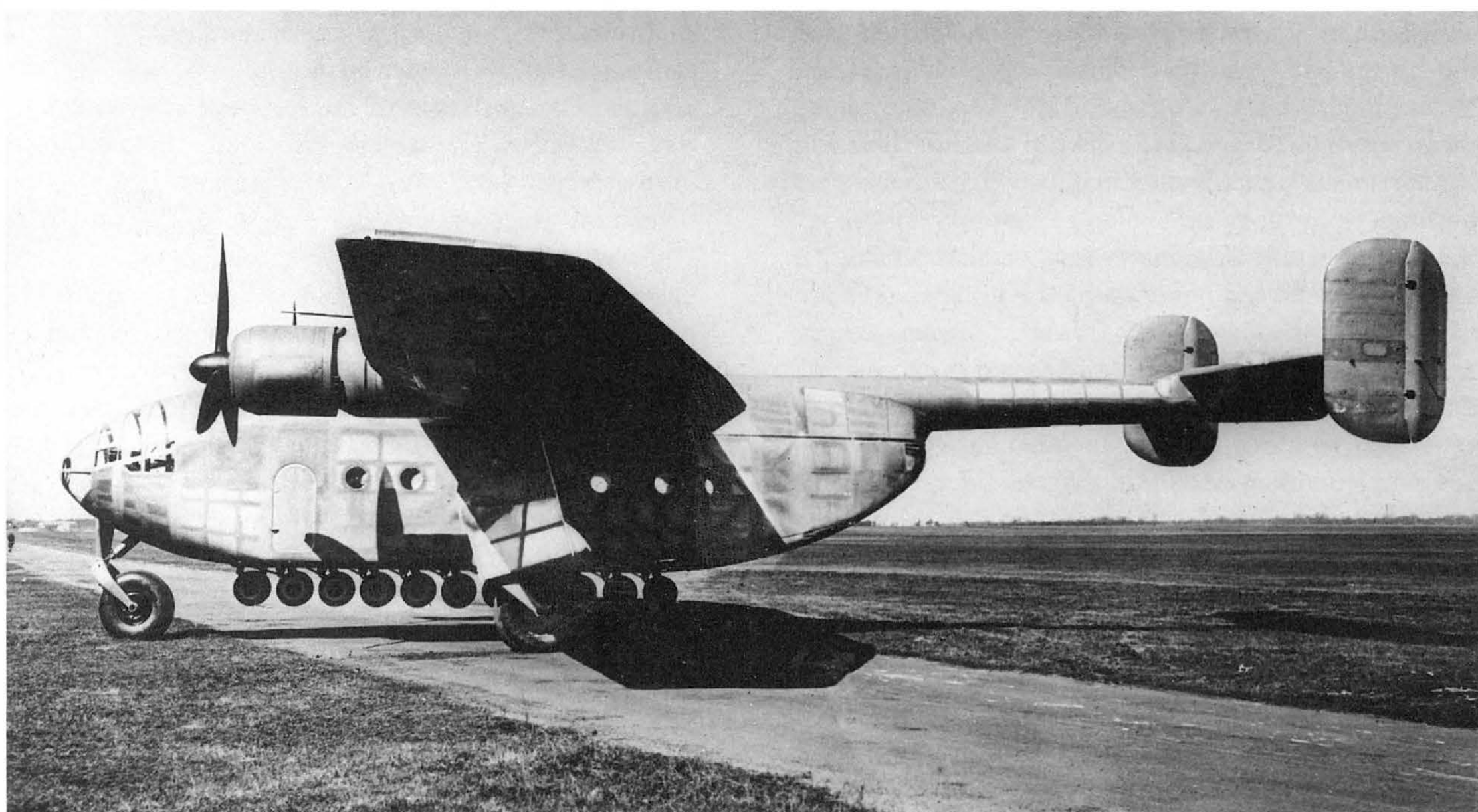
*38 Below: The enigmatic Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, seen while head of the Abwehr. His inability to reconcile his patriotism and his loyalty to Hitler ultimately led to his death at the hands of the SS*



*39 Below: Unlike Canaris, Army General Reinhard Gehlen survived the war to serve with the CIA and to become head of the post-war West German Intelligence services*







## 1942 DOUBLE AGENTS 'Zeppelin'

### Canaris

After the war ended, stories were widespread of double-agents, mostly in German service but working for the Allies, with a few exceptions such as the servant of the British Ambassador to Turkey ('Cicero'). Of senior German officers who were uncertain of their future under the Nazis little has ever been confirmed about their contacts with the West.

The Chief of the Abwehr, *Adm* Wilhelm Canaris, and some of his staff were anti-Nazis, involved with the 'Schwarze Kapelle' (Black Band), a conspiracy within the German General Staff which aimed to wrest control of the country from the Nazis, to agree peace terms with the Western Allies and to concentrate the Wehrmacht against the Soviet Union.

To what extent Abwehr double-agents collaborated with the British Intelligence Services has not been made known, but it has been claimed that in service with Abwehr Amt III, *Oberst* Hans Oster, later Chief of Staff to Canaris, provided means whereby anti-Nazi Germans and Jews could be protected from the Gestapo. Certainly, Abwehr officers Jebesen, Popov and Vermehren were agents of Britain's Military Intelligence Service. In 1940,

Oster had revealed the dates for the invasions of Denmark and Norway and of the Low Countries, but Allied Intelligence appears to have remained in ignorance of the information. When, however, Eddie Chapman ('Fritzchen'/'Zigzag') was parachuted into England in December 1942 for a sabotage mission, the B.I.A Section of M.I.5 was aware of his coming. In February 1944 Erich Vermehren ('Junior') learned that the Gestapo was about to take action against Schwarze Kapelle. Consequently, with his wife and other colleagues then based in Turkey, he defected and was given protection by M.I.5. The Head of the Abwehr Dienststelle in Ankara was recalled to Berlin and was reported to have committed suicide — the Abwehr Staff were literally fatally compromised.

As the war progressed, the intelligence provided by the Abwehr proved of such little value that SS-*Brigadeführer* Walter Schellenberg, Head of the RSHA, pressed for the amalgamation of all espionage and sabotage activities under control of the SD. The lack of reliable intelligence on the Eastern Front led Schellenberg to the concept of spying *en-masse*, using volunteers from the thousands of Soviet prisoners in German hands. This was his 'Project ZEPPELIN'. Out of some 10-15,000 initially recruited, by the beginning of 1943, with the war clearly going against the Germans, volunteer numbers declined drastically. Consequently, throughout 1943 ZEPPELIN inserted only some 19 groups, totalling 115 agents, behind Soviet lines. Even so, during 1943-1944, the Ger-

**40 Above:** Pictured straight out of the workshop before it has even been painted, this is the Arado Ar 232 VI in summer 1940. Years ahead of other transport aircraft in concept, the Ar 232's basic layout is still in use today. Unfortunately for the Luftwaffe, the type never really enjoyed the success it deserved, although it was an important element in the armoury of KG 200



mans always had some 500-800 agents behind Russian lines at any one time. Losses, however, were enormous. For example, Abwehr Command 104 despatched some 150 groups of 3-10 men each between October 1942 and September 1943. Survivors from only two of these groups returned.

In February 1943, Canaris was dismissed from his Abwehr post and appointed to the less influential Office for Commercial and Economic Welfare. Two months later Oster was also dismissed. Hitler decreed the formation of a unified *Nachrichtendienst* (Intelligence Service) to come into being on 1 June. In May *Reichsführer-SS* Heinrich Himmler announced that the organisations of the Abwehr were to be abolished and absorbed into a new *Militärische Amt* of the RSHA, operating directly in collaboration with the Intelligence Sections of the Army General Staff.

Meanwhile, with the increasing interest and participation in 'special operations' and the development of new weapons systems by the SS, by the RLM and its experimental establishments, centralised control of the activities of the *Versuchsverband Ob.d.L.* was seen to be necessary. It was decided that a new formation should be set up under the direct control of the OKL, to operate when required for the RSHA. This new formation was to be made responsible for development and operational trials of all air weapons systems and for special operations in the widest sense, under the command of an OKL Staff Officer, *Oberst iG* Heinrich Heigl.

Having survived for nine months after the attempted assassination of Hitler in June 1944, the unhappy Canaris (an assured patriot although a non-Nazi) and some twenty other conspirators were held in custody until the last few weeks of Germany's defeat, until, early in the morning of 9 April 1945, he and five others were hanged with piano wire in Flössenburg concentration camp, seemingly out of spite rather than because their guilt was proven.

## Gehlen

On 1 April 1942, *Oberstlt* Reinhard Gehlen was appointed *Chef der Fremde Heeres-Ost* (Head of Foreign Armies East), the Intelligence Agency of the OKH, responsible for gathering and collating information about the Red Army. There was also a *Fremde Heeres-West* but much of the information required was obtained via the Abwehr. Despite the date of his appointment, Gehlen was no fool and rapidly established an extensive network of agents and informers from the thousands of Soviet prisoners in German hands.

For many years after the war, the Soviet Government was extremely coy about releasing details even of German spies caught. The familiar Communist technique was applied to rewriting history and pretending the Germans had utterly failed to infiltrate any spies at all; in the few instances where espionage had been attempted the spies had been caught immediately and 'liquidated'. A few individual cases were admitted, however, presumably to demonstrate the vigilance and efficiency of Soviet counter-espionage.

In the spring of 1942, in one of the special collecting camps set aside for those who showed some willingness to collaborate, Gehlen's interrogators spotted a Soviet officer, a certain Mishinskii, who had been a political commissar in the army. (This in itself is of interest, as, following the 'Kommissar Erlass' — 'Commissar Decree' — issued by Hitler in March 1941, it was the general rule to immediately execute all captured commissars). Following training and indoctrination, Mishinskii was allowed to make an heroic 'escape' (Operation FLAMINGO) and returned to Soviet lines, loaded with valuable information. Needless to say, this was all carefully fabricated but was sufficiently good to ensure Mishinskii's return to favour and reinstatement into a variety of HQ jobs where he continued to supply Gehlen with high-grade information.

Among the many hundreds of agents infiltrated during these three years were several other determined men. One of Gehlen's most resourceful agents was 22-year-old Vassili Antonovich Skryabin, a nephew of the Soviet Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs. In August 1941, he defected to German troops and asked for political asylum:

"Agent's code name: 'Igor'. Has been convinced anti-communist since student days, feeling hatred towards Stalin because of the execution of his parents in the purges. Fully reliable, highly intelligent and energetic; received Afu training, speaks some German."

'Igor' undertook several sorties during 1943, bringing back valuable information from the front and, on two occasions, a number of defecting Soviet soldiers.

## Polikov or Tavrín?

Late in the summer of 1942 Himmler, Schellenberg and Rippentrop discussed with Hitler the practicability of undermining Russian resistance by murdering Stalin. It appears that, despite the disdain of some of the leading Nazis, Ribbentrop still had the confidence of his Führer when diplomatic matters, particularly those related to personalities in the Balkan States, became of importance. In the case of a political assassination his opinions were highly valued. The RSHA was instructed to prepare a plan for consideration; it seems that the first proposal was for two Soviet defectors to be landed near Moscow and, with the collaboration of a worker at a central vehicle depot, to assassinate Stalin by blowing up his car. Kaltenbrunner put the proposals and requirements to *Maj iG* Randel-Semper, Operations Officer (Ia) of KG 200 (which had been formed in February 1944 — see page 68), at the beginning of July 1944. According to post-war interrogation of this officer, the operation was called *POLITOV* (*sic*) (This is so close to 'Polikov' that this writer believes that this could well be the source of the confusion over the selected Russian agent's name).

Several variations on the story have been published; events were much as described here. On the Eastern Front KG 200 was usually able to carry out its part of 'insertion' operations, although their success on the ground was very uncertain. In this instance, the operation was dogged by misfortune but the landing was successfully made.



A defected Russian junior officer, captured in May 1942 and known to the Germans as Polikov, was assigned to the task. He had informed his captors that he had been awarded the Orders of the Red Banner, Lenin and Alexander Nevsky for his service at the front and displayed these medals with pride; but after the usual indoctrination he was prepared to go back as a spy under the ZEPPELIN programme. Gehlen singled him out for specialised training.

Under the name of *Mayor* Piotr Ivanovich Tavrín and accompanied by a woman radio-operator, *Leytenant* Maisdy-Leit Lidiya Adamicheva-Shilova, (actually his wife), Polikov was to be set down with a Russian M-72 motorcycle and sidecar by a KG 200 aircraft. The two agents would ride to Moscow and on 25 October, the anniversary of the October Revolution, would assassinate Stalin and other Soviet leaders with a radio-activated bomb concealed in a document case.

The aircraft selected by the Stab I./KG 200 as most suitable for the operation, because of its capability of rapid unloading and of its short landing and take-off runs, was one of the two prototypes of the twin-engined version of the Arado Ar 232 transport, nicknamed *Tausendfüssler* (millipede) because of the multi-wheeled undercarriage, alternatively *Tatzelwurm* for the many-clawed serpent of Norse mythology. The aircraft had a hydraulic loading/unloading ramp beneath its rear fuselage, perfectly suitable for the rapid deployment of the motorcycle combination. Polikov (for the purpose of this operation) was given a false wound scar by a German plastic surgeon and was impeccably provided with credentials by Gehlen's *Fremde Heer Ost*.

In July, Polikov was sent to Riga in readiness for an 'insertion' under the command of *Lt* Paul Goldstein of the I./KG 200. The chosen site was a temporary landing-ground, already known to the pilot *Uffz* Bruno Davids, in a forest clearing near Velikiye-Luki, at this time 97 km beyond the front line. When the order came it was unexpected and, like many orders from the RSHA, without

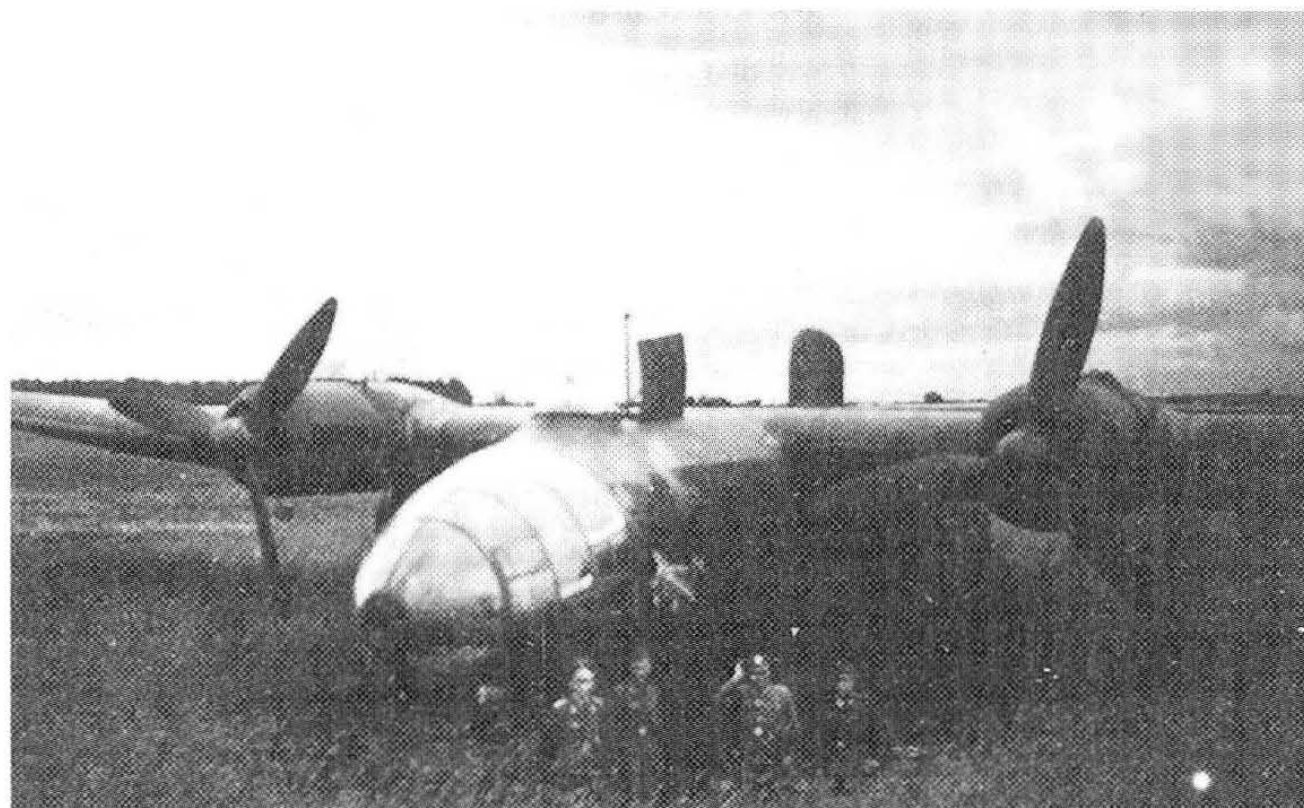
regard to the moonlight that Goldstein considered essential. Davids nevertheless found the clearing, but when he set the Ar 232A (possibly the A-08, W.Nr. 0100010, which is known to have served with 2./KG 200) down on the rutted ground, the loading/unloading ramp jammed. After several attempts to unload the motorcycle combination, Goldstein decided to abandon the operation and, when Davids reported the Arado's starboard undercarriage damaged, his controller instructed him to return. On landing at Zareby in Poland, the undercarriage collapsed and the aircraft slid on its wing across the airfield. The agents were immediately flown back to Riga.

The plan was not abandoned, simply postponed. A repeat was intended, this time with an Ar 232B four-engined version of the *Tatzelwurm*, (actually the Ar 232B-05, W.Nr. 110017, previously coded L5+ER, then, possibly, G6+WY) with *Ofw* Vierus at the controls. The flight came under anti-aircraft fire and was damaged during its night approach but was apparently put down in a field near Karmanovo at 03.00 hrs on 4 September. Nothing more was ever heard of the crew, although the Russians were allegedly arrested at a checkpoint.

Two explanations were given for the unexpected arrest of the agents; either Tavrín's authentic military decorations were incorrectly worn or the motorcycle combination was too clean but it may be that the Russians knew already from prisoners what was planned.

The Soviet version of the story is different. It must be presumed that, from 'appropriate interrogations', the Soviet authorities knew the purpose of the operation but the intended assassination is not mentioned. According to the report, P. I. Tavrín, who had defected in 1942, was arrested with his wife while travelling to meet a German aircraft that would fly them out after two years of espionage in the Soviet Union. Whether or not Tavrín or Polikov was the agent's real name, whether he was a true defector or a double-agent under Soviet control, the truth is unlikely to be discovered.

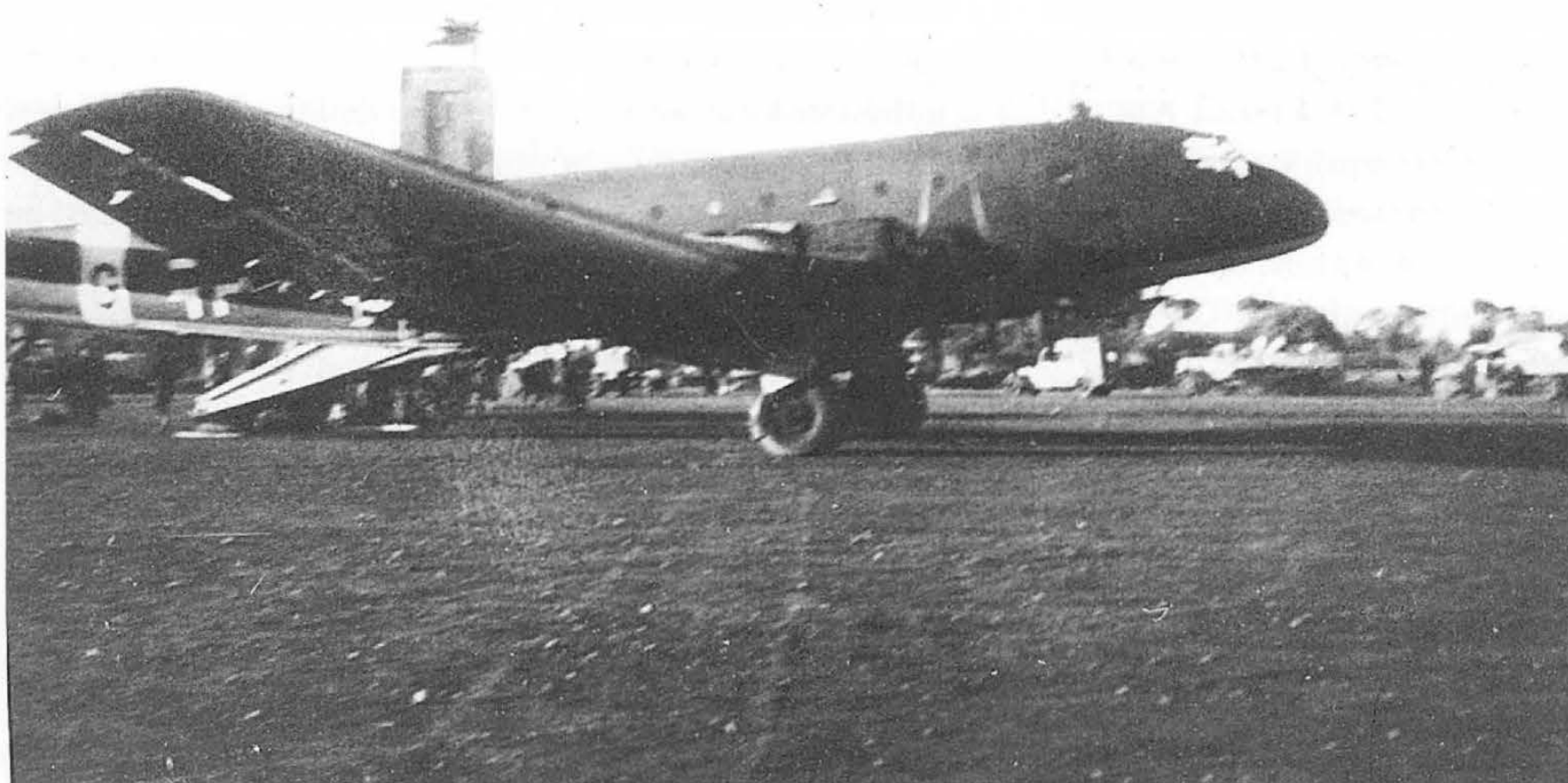
**41:** This is the Arado Ar 232A in which *Lt* Paul Goldstein forced-landed near Zareby, Poland, during the first attempt to land the Tavrín/Polikov team behind Soviet lines in July 1944. Note that the aircraft carries the flying elephant emblem of 7./Erg. TG. It was soon apparent that the twin-engined version of the Ar 232 was under-powered, consequently only 11 were built







**41 Above:** A poor picture of Russian origin showing the Ar 232B-05 used to insert Polikov/Tavrin after it crashlanded at Karmanovo, south-east of Rzhev, on 4 September 1944. No unit markings are visible



**42 Left:** One of the most important aircraft types available to the Vers. Verb. Ob.d.L. was the Junkers Ju 90 series. This is the Ju 90V7, W.Nr. 4919, GF+GH, undergoing trials in 1941-42 with LTS 290. Between 22 April 1943 and 8 August 1944 it carried the code J4+CH. Subsequently it became G6+AY with 14./TG 5, being destroyed by fire at Athens-Tatoi in October



**43:** This unusual rear view of the Ju 290A-1 (V4), W.Nr. 0153, was taken while it was in service with 2./Vers. Verb. Ob.d.L. as T9+FK in 1943-44. Although two ring sights can be seen, no guns appear to be mounted





## THE KOMMANDOS

### Middle East

Increasingly, aerial reconnaissance by the Versuchsverband Ob.d.L. was often replaced by the requirement to put men 'on the ground'. These demands put a considerable strain on the organisation, when the intelligence and other agencies were all pressing for priority. To divide the 2. Staffel into smaller formations appeared impracticable, for demands varied from one location to another and meeting those demands was often dependent on weather conditions.

Brand new formations involved the re-allocation of aircrews and ground staff, the transfer of aircraft and the nuisance of providing new Luftwaffe postal numbers. The simpler solution adopted was to break down the 2. Staffel into outstations or detachments, each dealing with local (usually Abwehr) requirements. Each of these 'Kommandos' was commanded by a *Hauptmann* or *Oberleutnant* with the semi-autonomous authority of a *Staffelkapitän*, each with a small staff, several complete crews and three or four aircraft, the number depending on local circumstances. For major maintenance or overhaul, aircraft were to be flown back to base workshops.

There is no record available for the setting-up of the Kommandos, each of which was given a cover-name by

**44 Above:** *Sonderkommando Junck* was a unique formation despatched solely to assist the Iraqi uprising of May 1941. A small number of He 111, Ju 90 and Bf 110 aircraft, all wearing Iraqi markings were sent; too late. This shark-mouthed Bf 110 of ZG 76, probably at Mosul, was one and was flown by Martin Drewes, later a famous night-fighter ace

the Abwehr, which was hardly ever used by the aircrew, who knew the relevant airfield by its usual name.

The only reference known to the author in British Air Ministry records is a brief report from the winter of 1944-45, *Agent Dropping activities of KG 200*. The author wrote, referring to the operations continued when the name of the Versuchsverband Ob.d.L. was changed (see page 68):

"A number of operations in Russia carried out by a detachment of 1.KG 200 based on the Romanian a/d of Zilistea. Others were known as Richard Wagner concerto units, operating in the Med, were designated by names of operas — Tosca, Traviata, Rigoletto, Aida, Carmen etc; more recently feminine names have been used e.g. Olga for a unit in the West, Klara for that at Wiener Neustadt."

Of the 2./Versuchsverband Ob.d.L he recorded:

"At different times it had used a/ds at Simferopol (for ops in Persia, Iraq and Caucasus) in Romania (for S. Russia), at Kalamaki (for Egypt, Transjordan and Morocco), Neustadt (Balkans) and at Echterdingen for (tactical) ops on the Western Front".

The list of names should be treated with a degree of caution for, apart from 'Traviata' (Lager 1 in Libya), the so-called 'Richard Wagner' series appears nowhere in other German contemporary documents. The names may have been based on the 'memories' of prisoners-of-war. In passing, there was no record of a cover-name being given to the detachment of the 3./KG 200 maritime Staffel at Bug in mid-1944.



It is easy to become confused by the nomenclature given to the 'Fronts' of the Red Army: Leningrad, Volkhov, North-West, Kalinin, West (Moscow), Bryansk, South-West (Stalingrad), South (Kharkov) and Caucasus Fronts, reading from north to south. Each of these 'Fronts' was the equivalent of a German Army Group, the Kommandos operating generally within the areas of such Groups, although there were no firmly set boundaries.

Below is a provisional list of the Kommandos of the 2./Versuchsverband Ob.d.L., under direct operational control of the Abwehr during 1943 and 1944:

Army Group served	Kommando	Location
Herresgruppe Nord	Clara	Bug/Riga/Stolp/Hamina
Herresgruppen Mitte & A	Maria/Wenzel	Krakow/Minsk
Herresgruppe Sud	Kommando Sud	Wiener-Neustadt/Balcick
Herresgruppen A & E	?	Zilistea/Simferopol
	Toska	Kalamaki/Salonika-Mega
	Carmen	Bergamo/Parma/Istres
Herresgruppen B & G	Olga	Stuttgart-Echterdingen/Hildesheim

The Stab of KG 200 held a number of Junkers Ju 290 long-range transport aircraft at Finow; these were flown briefly to the Kommandos for 'special operations' (particularly in the East) where sabotage groups were to be carried to distant countries.

Other, smaller, outstations were established and brought into operation as required, as at Orly-Villeneuve-le-Roi, Chartres, Aalborg, Stavanger-Sola, Rissala, Smolensk and Kharkov.

The seemingly obsessive secrecy of the Abwehr offices (completely effective at operational level) may seem unnecessary, especially regarding the cover-names applied to the outstations of the Versuchsverband Ob.d.L. after early drops of agents where security was a little lax. Soon the system was closely controlled; the agents, called 'Vertreuens-Leute' (trusted people), whether male or female, were each known by an identification number. Until the last few minutes before a take-off, they were accompanied by an Abwehr conducting officer acting always under a nom-de-guerre who, on some occasions, remained with his charges during the flight. The V-Leute met the aircrew just before take-off when the observer/navigator was given details of route and location of the dropping-zone.

During the flights, often of several hours' duration, a degree of farce sometimes developed. Allied interrogation teams made overmuch of statements by Luftwaffe prisoners-of-war that have been repeated by several writers, giving the false impression that discipline in the air often broke down. They told of agents being 'persuaded' to leave the aircraft only by administering large quantities of schnapps by or with the assistance of a despatcher who was trained to be a 'Herausschmeisser' (chucker-out). Otherwise operations by Kommando Olga appear gen-

erally to have been a success; in fact our ignorance of its operations is a measure of that success, for failures have been recorded in several cases.

## Middle East

Following Soviet demands to cede territory, late in November 1940 Hungary, Romania and Slovakia joined the 'Tripartite Pact' between Germany, Italy and Japan. On 18 December Hitler issued his 'Directive No. 18' for Operation BARBAROSSA, the long-planned invasion of the Soviet Union. For this to succeed he needed to ensure that his southern flank was secure so that he could move troops through the Balkans. Consequently he began negotiations with the Bulgarian Government, which signed the Pact (under duress) in March 1941, following which German, Italian and Hungarian forces invaded a recalcitrant Yugoslavia whose government surrendered on 17 April 1941; the rump of that country, Croatia, also joined the Axis Powers by the end of the month.

The OKW and the Abwehr retained the idea of cutting permanently the British supply route to the Middle East. The British Government had long feared that the Germans intended an advance through the Balkans and Syria to the Middle East. Since the end of the Great War, the British had maintained Treaty Rights to pass troops through Iraq into neighbouring Palestine, establishing air bases at Shaibah, near Basrah, and at Habbaniyah, near Baghdad. On 3 April 1941 the pro-Axis Raschid Ali, an ex-Prime Minister of Iraq, staged a *coup d'état* and appealed to the Germans for assistance in evicting the British from Iraq but no immediate help was provided; on the 6th, the Germans attacked Greece. The Greeks were already at war with Italy and British forces were there to assist in defence of the country. With much of Greece quickly overrun by superior forces, at the end of April the British evacuated the country and were preparing to make a stand in Crete, a possible launching point for a German attack on the Suez Canal. In spite of the military successes, for simple logistical reasons Hitler was compelled to postpone BARBAROSSA until June.

Raschid Ali's army laid siege to Habbaniyah on 29 April and the Luftwaffe began preparing for limited operations in Iraq, based on Athens-Tatoi airfield which was not used for the forthcoming attack on Crete. Heinkel He 111, Messerschmitt Bf 110 and Junkers Ju 90 transport aircraft in Iraqi markings were flown from Athens to Rhodes but, although Luftflotte 4 had nearly 1,000 aircraft in the Balkan countries, only a token force of 24 combat aircraft was sent to Mosul in northern Iraq, to begin bombing attacks on the British forces on 14 May.

The Aufkl.Gr.(F)/Ob.d.L. played only a small part; Knemeyer flew with Pfaff in an He 111, carrying *Oberst* von Blomberg and companions to Mosul for reconnaissance of the oilfields at Kirkuk and the Habbaniyah area. During one of these flights, von Blomberg was hit by a shot from the ground and died before Knemeyer could reach Baghdad Airport.

Raschid Ali's force launched an attack on Habbaniyah on 21 May but no additional German intervention took



place so, when the British lifted the siege of Habbaniyah at the end of the month, Raschid Ali fled the country.

While British forces moved into Iraq the Germans attacked Crete. After a heavy air bombardment, parachute troops were dropped on the four airfields. Although they suffered heavy losses, they managed to capture only the airfield at Maleme, where the Luftwaffe landed reinforcements but lost heavily in gliders and transport aircraft. The British were forced out of the island but, in the words of the paratroops' commander, *Gen-Oberst* Kurt Student, Crete became "the grave of the German paratroops".

Meanwhile, Knemeyer undertook survey and reconnaissance missions over the Crimean crossings and Sevastapol, flying from Balck in a Junkers 88 with a "full-vision" cockpit and BMW 801 engines. Only one of these flights across Armenia and Azerbaijan to Baku was successful. Although Soviet fighters occasionally tried to intercept, none had superchargers and their performance dropped at half the 30,000 ft altitude of the Ju 88. The route was southward to northern Turkey then across to the Caspian Sea. Tablik flew with Ruhnke from Balck but was lost over Sevastapol. On a few occasions similar flights were made from Nikolaevo near Plovdiv in Bulgaria and several aircraft from there went missing without trace.

By midsummer 1942, Rowehl's requests to the RLM and to Rechlin for improved versions of the Ju 88 had brought about modifications to several Ju 88C-7 fighters with BMW 801D engines and the GM 1 nitrous-oxide boost system. Knemeyer flew one in July on a test-flight over the Baltic in company with a BMW engineer and was enthusiastic about its performance, i.e. a speed of 580 km/h at 9,753 m and a ceiling of 11,000 m after a slow climb. One was delivered to Oranienburg in August.

From Stavanger-Sola, Knemeyer flew a Ju 88C-7 to Scapa Flow every day for a week, each day approaching from a different direction, to obtain photographs of the ships of the Home Fleet. He wrote:

"Once I came in above the clouds; Scapa Flow was clear and to the south Northern England was completely covered. First I photographed the Scapa Flow roadsteads, then flew some way south and photographed airfields on the Scottish coast. A little south of Aberdeen my flight-engineer, Ali, nudged me in the back and pointed out two fighters. They were climbing as a close pair from astern and to port, turning in towards us from 2 km away and 300 metres lower. I switched on the first stage of the GM 1 and let the 'plane slowly draw away, flying on south to Edinburgh. As we returned both were still 2 km away under our 'keel' but remained in that position. I then went into a gentle left turn. As I crossed the coast south of Dundee heading east, both fighters were forced to sacrifice height to match our speed, which had gradually increased.

"When we arrived back at Stavanger, the Staffelpatän had been talking to the listening post for enemy radio traffic on the Norwegian coast. The fighters had reported a twin-engined German reconnais-

sance plane south of Aberdeen on which they had closed. Then both the German engines had emitted smoke from their exhausts: 'The aircraft is increasing speed — it is accelerating eastwards — breaking off contact'. They thought the engines were overloaded, so stayed behind over the North Sea waiting for the engines to fail.

"I then wanted to take this machine from Stavanger to Northern Scotland and down the English coast, along the Irish Sea to Belfast, Glasgow and then Liverpool; this triangle took in all the American convoy routes. In good weather over Scapa I could see the ships lying on the other side of Britain. One could have photographed everything, all the way across. Nobody could fly there from Northern France, for the fighter defences were all located in the south.

"I told Rowehl at the time but, as he gave no consideration to relative aircraft performance, he thought it could be done from Beauvais. You had to make a long approach to achieve height where there were fighter defences."

Among his continual suggestions for improving performance, however, *Oberst* Rowehl proposed using the Ju 88D-6 with BMW 801D engines and twin superchargers. Knemeyer concluded:

"He later sent someone over the London/Thames Estuary in a Ju 88, BMW 801 who was promptly shot down so that the 'Tommys' got everything on GM-1 high-altitude reconnaissance."

Knemeyer was posted to Kastelli-Peliados in Crete and for three weeks was attached to the 3.(F)/123 which was deficient in experienced pilots. There he flew several maritime reconnaissance sorties to the Nile Delta in a Ju 88D searching for small coastal shipping, the usual altitude below 92 m to avoid radar detection. On one occasion he undertook an early morning mission to Port Said, along the Suez Canal and the Great Bitter Lake to Suez Harbour, out over the Gulf of Suez and back along the same track to Kastelli, a round-trip of some 1,770 km. In the afternoon he flew again to photograph Port Said and the Canal, Alexandria Harbour and shipping in the roadsteads — altogether eight hours in the air. Three days later, before he returned to Oranienburg, the port engine of his Ju 88 gave trouble over Alexandria Harbour at 9,448 m but he flew westwards towards Tobruk, gradually losing height then turned for the 322 km journey over the sea to land at Kastelli on one engine.

Below him, the pilots of British Spitfires strove in vain to reach 11,430 m for a brief attack. Knemeyer recalled, "It was like looking down into an aquarium and seeing the fishes swimming". His photos show a large assembly of Allied shipping, the first inkling of the attempt to relieve Malta, which ended in disaster for the British when German and Italian aircraft virtually destroyed the convoy.

In May 1942 a few Ju 86P reconnaissance aircraft were delivered to the 2(F)/123 at Kastelli. Their sorties were flown unhindered until 24 August when F/O G. Reynolds, in a 'stripped-down' Spitfire, succeeded in intercepting one of the Junkers flown by *Hptm* Bauer, commanding



the 2.Staffel. His aircraft came down in the sea from where he and his observer were rescued by a floatplane.

The Abwehr and OKW remained continually worried about the British presence in the Middle East, several times proposing action by agents with specialised industrial or local knowledge.

At the end of 1942, Lt G.J. Müller of the Abwehr was given charge in preparing plans for Operation SHEIKH MAHMUT, involving the setting up small bases for future anti-British operations in Iraq and the subsequent take-over of oilfields or sabotage of oil installations in the Kirkuk region. The destruction by bombing of telephone communications, storage depots, roads and airfields, as a support for the expected advance into the Caucasus by Heeresgruppe A, were also planned.

On 15 June 1943, after several changes of plan, Operation MAHMUT began when a Focke-Wulf Fw 200C of KG 40 left Berlin-Rangsdorf with Hptm Liemann of the Versuchsverband Ob.d.L. at the controls. This was the first time that the Abwehr had called upon the 'Special Unit' for a major long-distance flight in the Mediterranean and the Fw 200 flew on the first leg of a journey to Simferopol in the Crimea and, the next day crossed the Black Sea and southwards to its dropping zone. As was so often the case with long-distance flights by the Versuchsverband and, later, by KG 200, the flight was

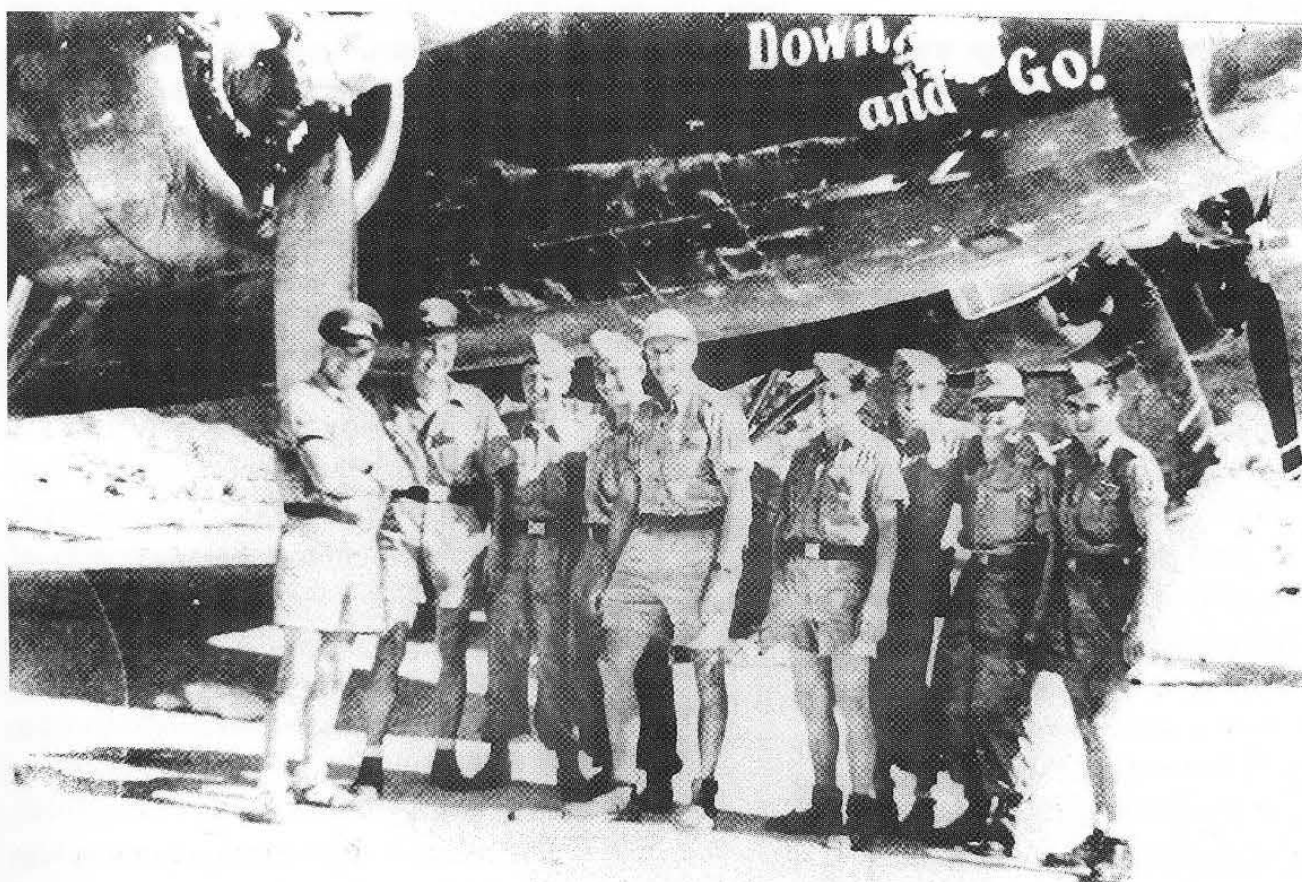
successful, as was the drop of supplies and medical materials to follow the personnel.

Müller had pre-war connections with Sheikhs Mahmoud and Hadji Agha Bassar, leading figures in the Kurdish nationalist movement which threatened the political stability of the region. Müller set out proposals for a small group made up of sections for command, for guerrilla attacks and ambush, for medical services and care and a flying section for liaison with the Army in the Caucasus. In addition, a small number of guns and adequate ammunition would be dropped with gold: 500 sovereigns for Mahmoud, 100 sovereigns for Agha Bassar.

On 23 July 1943, the British Air Attaché was able to inform the Turks that a German aircraft had been reported crossing Turkey to reach its operational area, but had been intercepted and had given up three German officers: 'Major' Müller and 'Lieutenants' Hoffmann and Konieczny. Sometime later it was reported that the three had been shot as spies. And so Operation MAHMUT achieved nothing at all. With a complete Allied victory in North Africa, and German forces recoiling from their defeat at Kursk, there was little point in the Abwehr pursuing further operations in the Middle East.

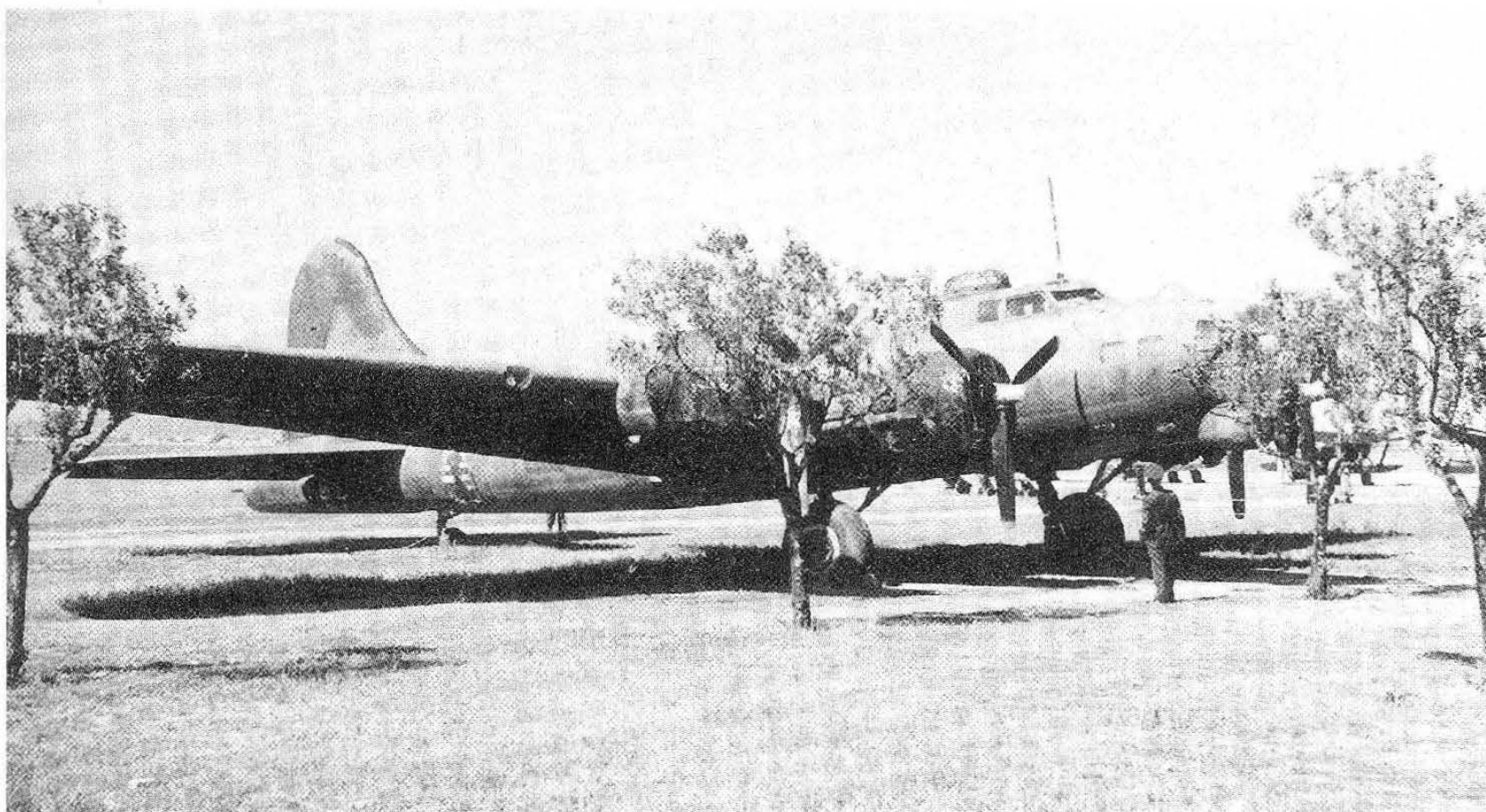


**45:** Another view of the Ju 90V7, GF+GH, during operational trials in the Mediterranean in 1941-42. The rear 'trapoklappe' has been lowered for loading



**46:** Unidentified Luftwaffe crewmembers in front of the captured B-17F-90-BO 42-30146 of the 94th BG. This had been lost on 29 July 1943 and was the second Fortress to be captured intact by the Germans. It is shown here at Athens-Kalamaki while with I/KG 200, probably Kommando Toska. Note that it still retains its US-applied camouflage and nose art





## 1943

# THE VERSUCHSVERBAND Ob.d.L.

### Mediterranean operations

By the beginning of 1943 the purpose of the Aufkl.Gr/Ob.d.L. had changed. The 1. Staffel, commanded by Rowehl, had become increasingly involved in the development of high-altitude, high-speed aircraft for reconnaissance, which it undertook as a matter of course during trials, while the 2. Staffel, under Gartenfeld, was employed entirely on missions for the Intelligence services, the Abwehr and, increasingly, the SD. From its photographs target maps for land forces and the Luftwaffe were prepared.

In fact, so much of the Gruppe's activity was no longer concerned directly with reconnaissance that the unit was completely transformed. On 1 March 1943, the 4.(F)/Ob.d.L. was re-formed at Berlin-Rangsdorf as the 1. Staffel of the Versuchsverband Ob.d.L. under Rowehl's command, its primary purpose still to conduct operational trials of new aircraft types and 'weapons systems'. Its duties thus included sporadic photo-reconnaissance over the Mediterranean Sea and the British Isles besides the Eastern Front.

**47 Above:** Parked in an olive grove near Valencia, this is almost certainly B-17G-10-VE 42-39969, IW-K, of the 401st BG, which went MIA on 11 January 1944. This was the first G-model to be captured intact by the Luftwaffe. The evidence for its identity is circumstantial, however it is clearly an early G-model (note the position of the cheek gun fairing) and the nose turret. There are the remains of the triangle marking of the 1st Bomb Division on the fin, underneath the paint that covered a swastika, and, most importantly, the aircraft was officially 'recovered' in 1948

Through the interest of Göring and Canaris, Hptm Edmund Gartenfeld was appointed to command a 2. Staffel responsible entirely for clandestine flights. The 'Gruppe Gartenfeld' was stationed at Rangsdorf with some 25 three-man crews recruited from company test-pilots and from Lufthansa.

By midsummer the 2.Versuchsverband.Ob.d.L. had been especially involved in dropping sabotage agents and demolition parties on the Eastern Front, covering areas not only immediately behind the Soviet lines but strategic areas as far afield as the Urals.

Experiments and trials had continued for the 1.(F)/Ob.d.L.; an *Oberfeldwebel* of the Staffel reported on improvements to the Ju 88s:

"Besides the Ju 88D variants and special conversions, some other Ju 88s received a camera compartment and an improved engine system. At Dessau several Ju 88C-7s were built, one of which was handed over to Kommando Rowehl. One crossed Scapa Flow in July 1942 with an extraordinary performance of 580 k/h (about 360 mph) at 10,000 m."

This was probably one of a series of flights described by Siegfried Knemeyer:

"Krebs and Schaller already had one of the Ju 88s with BMW 801s, without gondola or armament and equipped with a GM-1 tank, GM-1 was a nitrous-oxide booster."

The unidentified Oberfeldwebel referred to above also noted:



"Our aircraft was powered by two BMW 801Ds and GM-1. Spitfire pilots trying to intercept were unable to reach the special reconnaissance Ju 88".

By late 1942, however, high-altitude versions of the Spitfire were beginning to make an appearance in service, therefore Rowehl suggested that the Ju 88D-6 with BMW 801D together with two modern superchargers should be further developed.

On 28 August Rowehl stated that although the combination of BMW 801D and GM-1 of the Ju 88D-6 was "unsafe" (presumably from fighter attack) he was confident that the aircraft's problems could soon be solved; meanwhile a few of the Ju 88s were fitted with Junkers Jumo 213 engines with GM-1 injection. Early the following year several Ju 88-Ds with injection systems operated over the English Midlands, mainly photographing the many new airfields under construction for the RAF and US Eighth Air Force bomber programme. By July the steadily improving British air defences brought a change in Rowehl's tactics. Some rebuilt Ju 88A-14s were fitted with cameras in the fuselage and flare equipment to permit night photo-reconnaissance.

Behind the many operations of the Gruppen Ob.d.L., the workshop engineers worked constantly. *Oberst* Edgar Petersen, who was now in command of all the Luftwaffe experimental establishments, with headquarters at Rechlin, also had teams at the stations at Darmstadt and Peenemünde. The commanding officer at Rechlin was *Hptm* Daser, formerly a test-pilot with Focke-Wulf, but it was at a small unit at Chateaufort, 32 km from Paris, that damaged Allied aircraft were recovered and reconstructed under the command of *Stabsingenieur* Binder, with little reference to Rechlin. The unit usually producing more rapid results.

Göring, however, ever dissatisfied, always wanted new aircraft in production before full test programmes had been completed. He replaced many of the technical experts by operationally experienced officers, but they often lacked the necessary expertise and, in order to curry favour with their chief, frequently gave him reports that showed development of existing aircraft designs and the potential of new aircraft as more advanced than was so.

## Carmen and Toska

By the autumn of 1943, the Italians had lost their overseas territories and, as the Allies battled their way slowly up the Peninsula and the US 5th Army closed on Naples, in September the Italian Government was overthrown. Mussolini was hidden (in some luxury) in the Gran Sasso and a surrender was negotiated on 8 September. This brought the Italian Fascists into a simple alliance with Germany. A part of the Regia Aeronautica continued to oppose the Anglo-American forces as the Aeronautica Nazionale Repubblicana (ANR) which handed over some aircraft to the Luftwaffe and allowed the Germans to take over factory production of others. Among the aircraft transferred were numbers of the purposeful Savoia-Marchetti S.M.75 three-motor transports.

Kommando Süd of the 2. Versuchsverband set up a de-

tachment called 'Carmen' at Bergamo-Senate, intending it to undertake short-range agent insertions with Ju 88s and He 111s. In all some 400 agents were recorded as having been parachuted within a period of six weeks or so. A B-17 was flown in to carry larger parties than could be accommodated in the twin-engined aircraft. On a couple of occasions aircrew of US 321st Bomb Group B-25s reported seeing this Fortress over southern France and northern Italy and (perhaps another) over Greece in November 1943. Reports of a "square marking" on the tail are of no help in identifying the B-17, for 42-30146 and 42-3190, both of which operated briefly over the Mediterranean Sea, may still have carried the square 'designator' of the US 4th Bomb Wing on the tail fin; as did 42-39974 later.

After the surrender of the Axis forces in North Africa the previous May, the OKW had little knowledge of the build-up of the Allies armies and could only guess where the Allies might be planning to land on the Mediterranean coasts of Europe. The 2./Ob.d.L. was required to obtain intelligence and established another Kommando from Rangsdorf at Kalamaki, this time named 'Toska' for operations over North Africa, initially for reconnaissance tasks, but later those of an offensive nature.

In comparison with the regularly repeated sorties by the aircraft of Kommando Clara, those by Carmen and Toska were varied and individual.

Two of the Fortresses from the I./KG 200 were flown to Kalamaki for operations by Kommando Toska in May 1944. *Oblt* Korn, pilot, with *Lt* Hans Arscheid, observer, and a crew of four were ordered to fly one of the B-17s carrying a group of agents to be dropped in North Africa (Operation ANTI-ATLAS). For Korn, the B-17 was a new machine of which he had no experience or knowledge. He and Arscheid greatly preferred to use the familiar Ju 290 rather than a captured aircraft. Moreover, that aircraft still carried its US markings, not only the unit designators that were sometimes left alone, but the national markings, presumably on the wing surfaces.

Both airmen feared that they would be treated as spies if they and the aircraft should fall into enemy hands. Preparations for the mission were virtually complete and the flyers were content to undertake the operation in a Ju 290. They took off at 19.07 hrs on 25 July from Kalamaki and crossed the Mediterranean towards the Gulf of Sirte where the Abwehr had found there to be a gap in the Allied radar cover.

Another Abwehr scheme, cover-named 'ETAPPEN-HASE' (Hopping Hare) was for the establishment of supply dumps and airstrips along the Algerian-Tunisian border, the landing grounds to be used as bases from which parachute assault troops, flown in in captured B-17s, would land and attack Allied airfields in Algeria and Morocco, there to capture more aircraft for further operations. The scheme for a series of supply dumps echoed the 'Etappen' supply network formed during the First World War by German agents in neutral ports.

Kommando 'Toska' was given the task of preparing the first landing-grounds in Africa and of setting up a radio station to be operated by Arab agents trained at



Rangsdorf. Preliminary reconnaissance by German aircraft periodically crossing the North African coast would certainly be observed by the chain of Allied radar stations from Alexandria to Tangier, so it was decided that a landing-ground should be prepared in the interior to serve as a base for reconnaissance. It was first intended that a Fieseler Fi 156 Storch be towed by a Heinkel He 111 as far as the African coast, then released at low level to fly into the desert, but trials at Kalamaki were unsatisfactory and a Messerschmitt Bf 108 (Werk Nr 1670) was substituted for the Storch.

On 12 November, *Oblt* Paul Karger flew an He 111 towing the Bf 108, piloted by the commander of 'Toska', *Oblt* Horst Dümcke, south-westwards across the Mediterranean. Over the Gulf of Sirte the Bf 108 was released to fly on while the Heinkel turned away to distract Allied radar. The chosen objective was an emergency landing-ground by the airfield at Tamet, near El Makarem in Tunisia, abandoned since its use by the Italian Regia Aeronautica in 1942. There Dümcke landed safely and radioed his arrival, but a supply-drop plan for the following day was abandoned when air-raids on Kalamaki damaged two of the supply aircraft. No further flight was undertaken until 17 November, by which time Dümcke and his observer, *Lt* Kussmal, had used up all their water. Karger flew a sand-camouflaged He 111, coded T9+NK, across the Mediterranean early in the morning but mist hid the Libyan coast and, as he was unable to obtain a 'fix' by radio, Karger landed in the desert. After dark, he was able to locate his position by the stars as only 30 km from Dümcke's camp, Lager 1 (cover-named 'Traviata') in the Wadi Tamet and flew the Heinkel there the following day. On 19 November, having camouflaged the Bf 108, the advance reconnaissance party returned in the He III to Athens/Tatoi.

The W/T station at Wadi Tamet was established in primitive conditions in November and continued traffic with Toska until mid-December when, perhaps because British radio operators were feared close to locating the German station, personnel were withdrawn.

Several Arabs were training at Rangsdorf, seemingly to replace the German personnel, two of them to deal entirely with weather reports. An intelligence assessment therefore considered it possible (and rightly) that the station was destined for activities not restricted to the weather.

A second W/T station was set up 16 km from Wadi Tamet with a He 111 in readiness as a means of escape should Lager I be captured. The operation was throughout supplied by air. Lager I was re-opened in January and maintained constant communication with Toska to where a B-17, probably 42-30146, *Down and Go!*, was transported on 16 January with an excess of secrecy and attempts at camouflage. This aircraft made one flight to Africa with supplies.

At the end of the year, a Savoia Marchetti S.M. 75 and an Heinkel He 111 were used to transport material and supplies to the Wadi Tamet where a defensive dug-out position was prepared. A radio link and a 9092 ltr petrol dump were set up. In mid-January 1944 a B-17 (possibly A3+BB) was flown to join Kommando Toska

but it made only one return flight to Tunisia. The operation continued and, after a series of local reconnaissance flights by the He 111 and the Bf 108, two more strips were cleared, Lager 2 and Lager 3, this last in Algeria, in preparation for the airfield assaults.

In January 1944 the reconnaissance flights from the Wadi Tamet began again. On landing after one of these flights, a propeller blade of the Bf 108 was damaged. The aircraft was made serviceable simply by cutting away the tip of the other blade and re-varnishing both. To Lager 1 the Savoia Marchetti S.M. 75, AI+AZ, brought in fuel and equipment but there, during the night of 13 March, radio operator *Uffz* Martin Olhoff reported hearing the sound of distant engines. At dawn on 14 March the detachment came under fire from a British Long Range Desert Group force, 100 strong, and the S.M. 75 caught fire. The Germans believed, from the size of the attacking force with its armoured personnel carriers, that the attackers were not merely on routine desert patrol but that they had prior knowledge of the camp. The four men of the Savoia crew, observer *Fw* Hubert Schultz, Olhoff, air-gunner Fleckner and mechanic Witte, were taken prisoner. When, at 16.00 hrs, the Bf 108 and the Heinkel flew in, their crews were horrified to find the camp destroyed and the S.M. 75 burnt out. They hurriedly refuelled the He 111 from the cache of fuel that the British troops had not discovered and, after rendering the Bf 108 unserviceable, they boarded the He 111 for the flight back to Greece.

After a delay of six weeks, *Oblt* Dümcke was able to persuade *Oberst* Heigl that sufficient time had elapsed since the British discovery of Lager 1 for an attempt to renew the operation. The B-17 that had been flown from Rangsdorf to Athens in mid-January had made only one operational flight from Kalamaki, remaining there concealed under camouflage netting. On 16 May Dümcke flew the B-17 to the Wadi Tamet where, his crew observing no signs of an enemy presence, he landed. While the engines were still running the aircraft came under small-arms fire and the aircraft was hit in many places, but Dümcke, although wounded in the hip, was able to take off and head for the coast. The damage to the aircraft was such that he just failed to reach the southern tip of Greece and ditched the B-17 offshore in the Bay of Kalamata. There it sank and the crew struggled to the shore without loss; *Uffz* Gunter Harlos, the only serious casualty, was admitted to hospital with a thigh injury.

On 21 June a B-17G, 42-39969, possibly coded A3+JB, based at Kalamaki, captained by *Lt* Wolfgang Pohl and a crew of three left for a mission (ANTI-ATLAS) from the outstation at Istres-le-Tube, to set down a Foreign Legionnaire, an Arab and several SS-agents in Arab dress, under the supervision of an Abwehr officer, cover-named *Lt* 'Wimmer'. This was one of the Fortresses whose operational range had been extended by fitting internal fuel tanks on a stout timber framework within the fuselage. The course was to take them along the French coast, down the eastern coast of Spain and across the Mediterranean somewhat east of Gibraltar. An unexpected problem arose soon after the B-17 had left Marseille on 26 June,



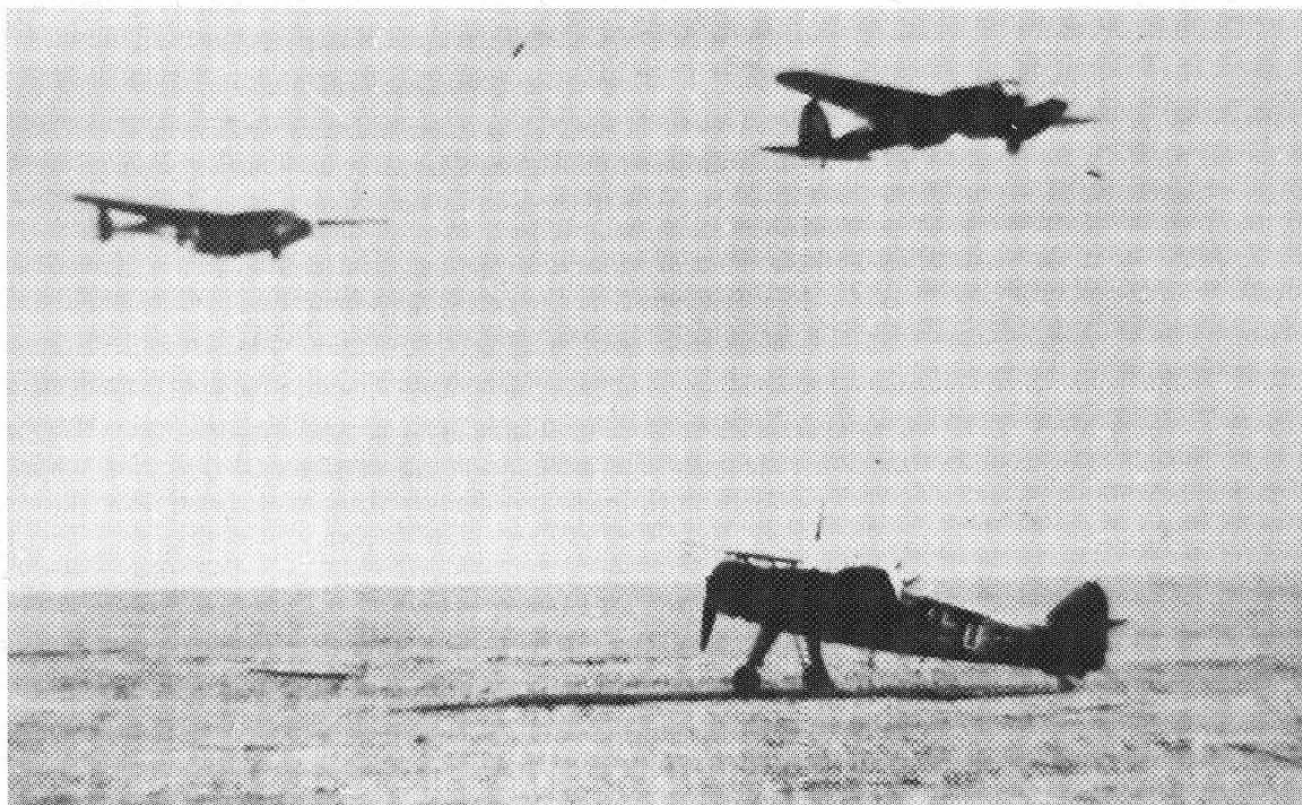
for the pumps for the extra tanks had been wrongly installed, and Pohl was forced to abandon the mission. He diverted to Valencia's military airfield. There, the Abwehr 'conducting officer' and his charges were spirited away, while the crew destroyed their orders and flight plan.

The German Air Attaché soon arrived on the scene, alerted by Spanish security officers who provided a guard to isolate the aircraft and lightly 'camouflaged' it with tree branches to conceal its markings. If this was to prevent the Western Allies knowing that the Spaniards sometimes provided services for the Luftwaffe, there was little point in the exercise, which was an open secret, but destruction of the flight plan was essential.

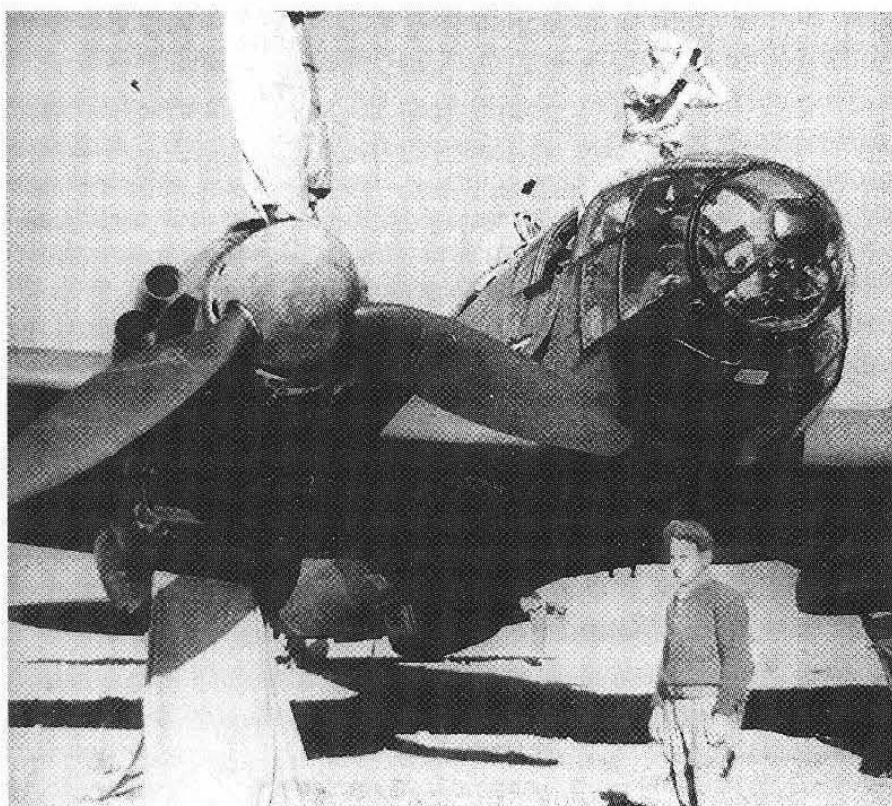
There followed a question as to whether or not the Fortress still bore US markings. Gen Karl Koller of the OKL, on being told of the forced-landing, appears to have treated the matter lightly — compared with continuing losses of thousands of men on the Eastern Front, the loss of one aircraft, no matter how useful, for 'special

operations', must have seemed unimportant. He issued an instruction for the aircraft's markings to be obliterated if they were other than the German national insignia which could be left alone. No matter what they were, in fact the markings were painted out and, consequently, there is no certain record of the B-17's identity, although the only known photograph (see page 41) shows what appears to be the remnants of an 8th Air Force 1st Bomb Division triangle marking on the fin\*. The crew were given false identity papers and were returned a fortnight later to Germany with other Luftwaffe personnel in the guise of members of a football team. The Fortress was impounded by the Spanish authorities and remained at Valencia, awaiting some decision about its disposal.

*\*The only early B-17G (note position of cheek gun) fitting that description and which was lost from the 1st BD early enough to have been taken over by the Luftwaffe was 42-39969 of the 401BG, 614BS, which went MIA over the Pas de Calais on 14 January 1944. It was officially recorded as being "recovered" in 1948.*



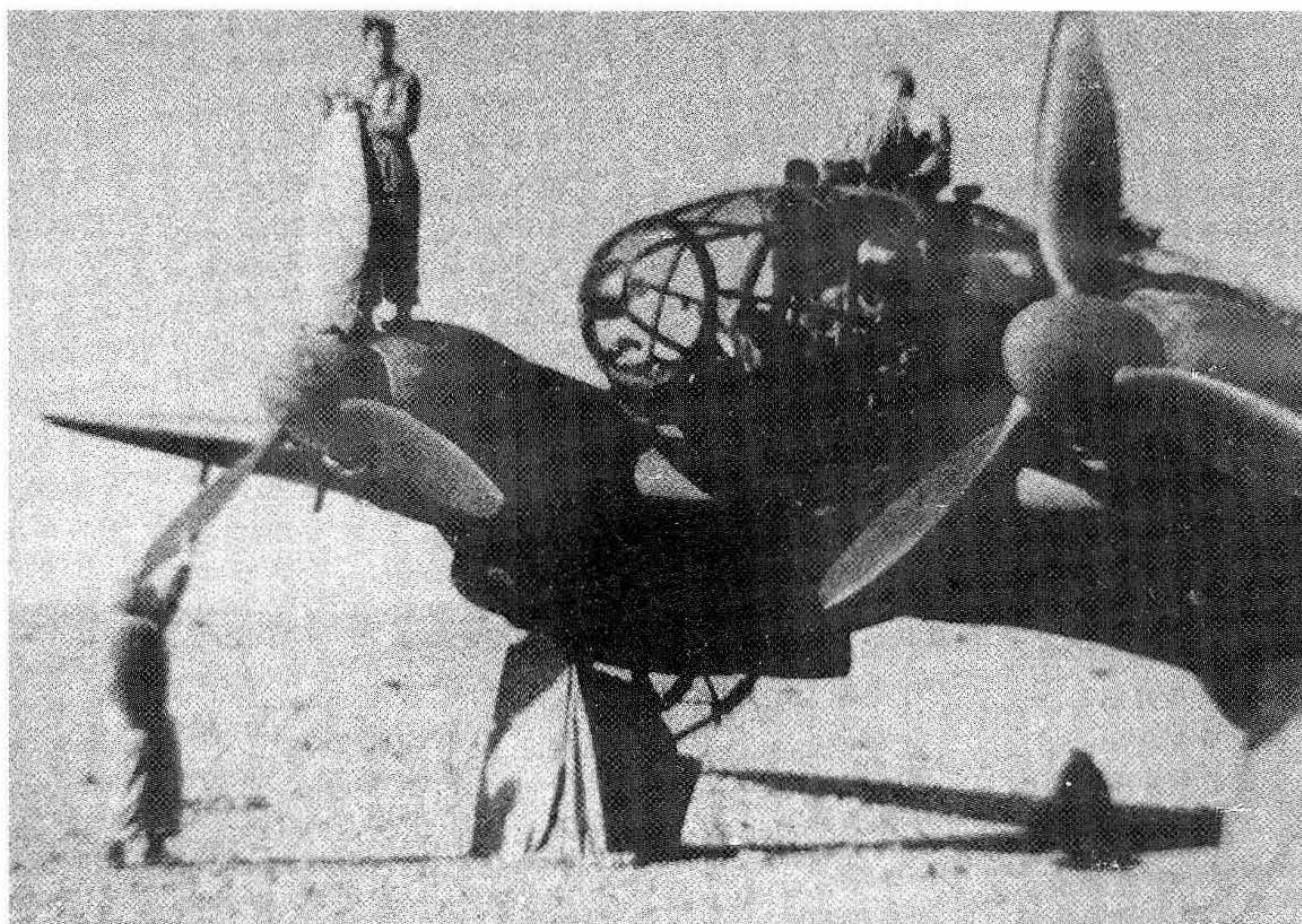
**48:** Trials with an He 111 towing an Fi 156 and Bf 108, similar in style to that shown here with a Go 242, were a necessary part of the preparations for the Abwehr operation named 'Hopping Hare' which was to be carried out by Kommando Toska. On the actual operation, the towed aircraft was a Bf 108, flown by Horst Dümke, the CO of Toska. Dümke had earlier been a pilot with Wekusta 2./Ob.d.L. and had ditched in the Atlantic from where he and his crew had been eventually rescued by a French fishing vessel and an ASR Breguet Bizerte flying boat of Seenotstaffel 1



**49:** The sand-coloured He 111H-16, T9+NK, of Oblt Paul Karger and his crew, seen on the morning of 17 November 1943. They had landed in the desert some 30km from Lager 1, Dümke's desert base, on account of fog in a mission to rescue Dümke and his observer who had run out of water (see page 43)



**50:** Another view of T9+NK in the Libyan desert near Tamet, some 30km from the temporary base code-named 'Traviata'



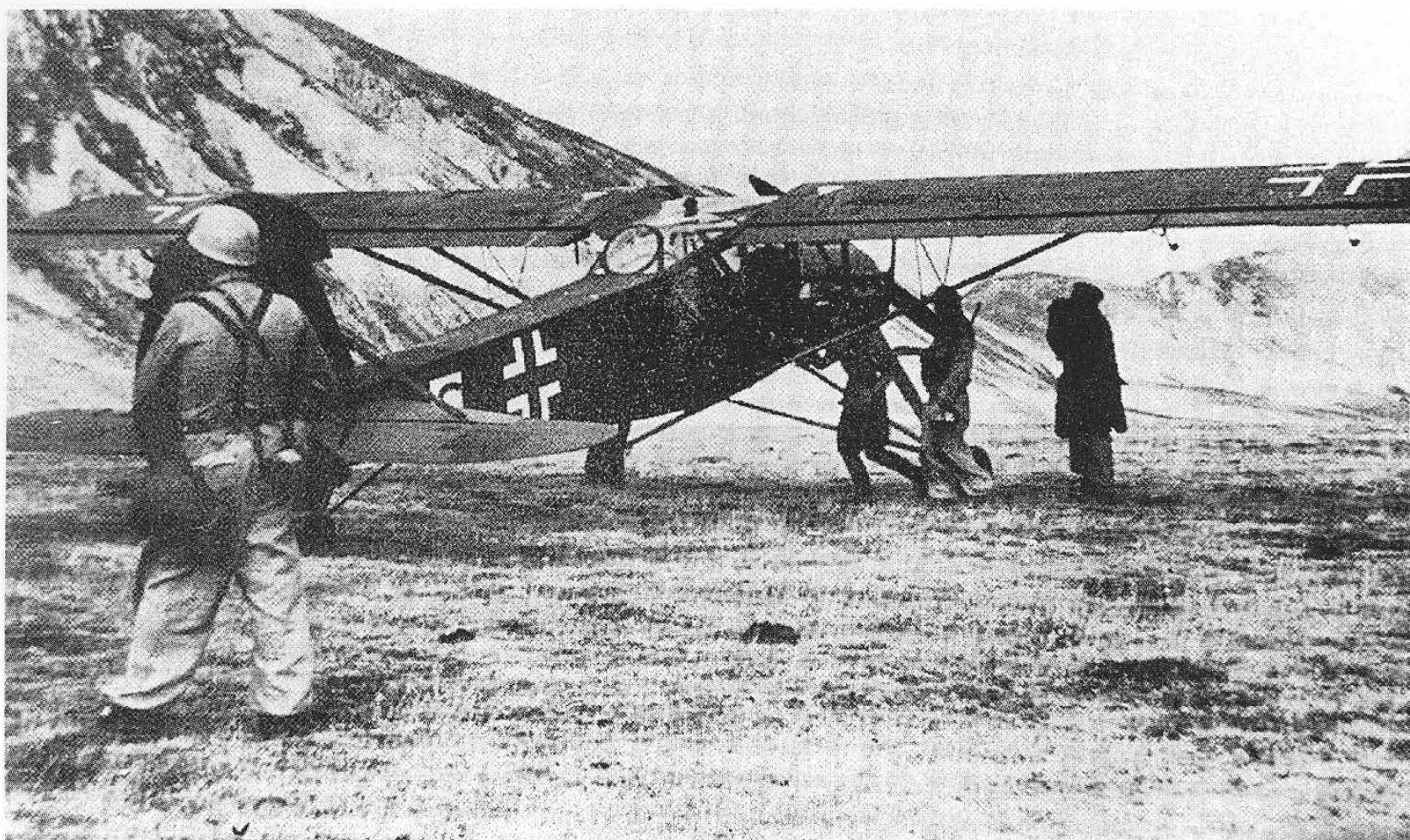
**51:** There is some uncertainty over the identity of the Savoia-Marchetti S.M. 75 used by Toska. Lothar Sieber's logbook identifies it as AI+AZ, (D-AIAZ?) c/n 32060. Italian sources, however associate two military serials, MM 60539 and 60540, with that number. Both aircraft were very similar in specification. AI+AZ is seen here at Lager 1 ('Traviata') shortly before it was destroyed by British ground forces on 14 March 1944



**52:** A major item in the equipment of the German special forces was the DFS 230 glider, an example of which from LLG 1 is seen here in France in summer 1944. It is believed this is one of the aircraft which landed KG 200 ground forces in the operation against the French Resistance on the Vercors







## SPECIAL WEAPONS AND SPECIAL FORCES

### Enter Otto Skorzeny

Throughout 1943 the OKW, OKL and OKM were each experimenting with new 'weapons systems' that required not only development, but the training of personnel to operate them. All were intended to be used for some spectacular blow against a major Allied target, but there seems to have been a lack of co-ordination between the several planning teams or a lack of interest at headquarters level which slowed development and trials.

One of the few officers who had some authority to speed up matters and to propose operations employing the new systems was Otto Skorzeny, described as "one of Hitler's most successful irregular soldiers." After a brief period in the Luftwaffe and at the headquarters of the Waffen-SS in Berlin he was taken ill and was invalided out of the service in December 1942. His talents, however, were put to good use when appointed in April 1943 to expand the Oranienburg Lehr-Versuchsverband, a tactical training unit of commandos reporting direct to *Obersturmbannführer* Walter Schellenberg, head of the RSHA. It has been supposed that Skorzeny was deliberately chosen by the OKW to sabotage the setting-up of another SS 'special formation', but he took advantage and formed another 'commando' school for sabotage agents at Friedenthal near Berlin. This 'Special Formation' must not be confused with the SS-Einsatzgruppen, the execution squads operating on the Eastern Front.

Five weeks after the establishment of Skorzeny's Versuchsverband, the SS was alerted to the possibility of Marshal Pétain and his Vichy Government decamping

to join the French administration in North Africa, so Skorzeny immediately allocated SS and Police Battalions to prevent any such flight. These troops remained in position until December 1943. Pétain and his puppet government moved to 'safety' at Sigmaringen in Southern Germany in August 1944. Meanwhile, Skorzeny achieved prominence after being instructed to obtain the release of the Italian *Duce*, Benito Mussolini, held captive by the Italian Government after its capitulation and new co-operation with the Western Allies on 3 September. Having discovered that Mussolini was held at the *Albergo Campo Imperatore* on the Gran Sasso Plateau, east of Aquila, on 12 September Skorzeny led a party of 18 men from his Versuchsverband and 72 from *Maj* Mohr's 1. Lehr Bataillon of Luftwaffe paratroops, flown in nine DFS 230 gliders for Operation EICHE (Oak Tree) to release Mussolini and transport him to Germany. The feat dismayed the Allies and irritated the Luftwaffe whose men had carried out most of the planning, but encouraged the preparation of plans by the Luftwaffe to employ small airborne forces for special operations. Skorzeny was promoted to *Sturmbannführer*; his close association with Hitler, which

**53 Above:** Gran Sasso, 12 September 1943. Guarded by a Luftwaffe paratrooper in tropical uniform, the two-seater Fi 156 piloted by Hptm Gerlach prepares to fly Mussolini (and Otto Skorzeny) away from the mountain-top prison. The take-off itself was not without incident when the overloaded aircraft barely staggered into the air over a cliff edge before gaining flying speed. Unfortunately no details of the actual aircraft used in the rescue are known.



he exaggerated, later allowed him to use Hitler's name to advance his plans.

One of Skorzeny's tasks during the summer of 1943 had been to consider an attack, cover-named ULM, on Soviet industrial plants in the Urals. The scheme was reconsidered during the autumn when Himmler decided that the 'Friedenthal Special Force' might carry out an attack on the Magnitogorsk steelworks, but Skorzeny did not have the resources to carry out the plan. In fact a seven-man ZEPPELIN team with this cover name was dropped in the Urals in June 1944. None returned.

One of the special Luftwaffe Fallschirmjäger (paratroop) units was formed at Dedelstorf, 64 km north of Braunschweig in October 1943 under the command of Maj Hans Jungwirth, a veteran of the Tunisian campaign. The new formation, incorporating survivors of parachute units that had suffered heavily in battle, was given the cover-name 'Transportkolonne XI-Ost' and was intended to employ 'special weapons'. The terms Fallschirmjäger and Fallschirmtruppen were both used for airborne troops, whether trained to be dropped by parachute or put down by assault glider. The unit moved to Hildesheim and from there about 100 men, under the command of Oblt Friedrich Schäfer, were immediately transported to Pütnitz on the Baltic Coast to begin training under naval supervision.

After the Italian capitulation, a number of pro-Fascist officers of the Italian Navy, which had successfully used explosive motor boats (*barchini esplosivi*) in the Mediterranean offered their services to the Kriegsmarine. These 'brothers in arms' (Waffenbrudern) were to train the Fallschirmjäger and more of Skorzeny's Special Formation in the operation of *Linse* explosive-carrying motor boats. Their expertise was used in the development of a one-man, high-speed, twin-hulled vessel for 'Kommando K', namely the Kleinkampfmittel-Verband (Midget Weapons Unit) of the Kriegsmarine. This 'Schlitten' — 'sledge' catamaran with 1,200 kg of Trialen explosive fitted between the twin hulls, was to be carried by 'Wasser-Gos', Gotha Go 242C cargo-gliders modified with planing bottoms and flotation bags, so that the vessel could be launched into the sea fairly near a shipping target. The weapons system was known as the Koch-Gerät, devised by Maj Adolf Koch. It was optimistically stated that the 'driver' could leap overboard before the device hit its target.

The Schlitten was tested at Travemünde and towing trials of the modified Wasser-Gos were begun, first with He 111 tugs, then with the He 111 Z-1 *Zwilling* (twin) glider-tugs remaining of those that had partly equipped the Grossraum-Lastensegler-Gruppe (Bulk Cargo Glider Wing).

In November the Luftwaffe Operations Staff had made provisional plans for the temporary withdrawal of air units in the East, (then being used for practical operations piecemeal), for mass attacks on the Soviet electric power industry. Skorzeny was, of course, called upon for his views, having been considering a plan whereby explosive charges placed by sabotage agents could be remotely

set off by aircraft-borne radio, in the event of Allied invasion.

On 28 February 1944, Oblt Karl-Heinz Lange was ordered to meet Oberst Heigl at Berlin-Gatow and instructed to review the proposal for the operation against power stations and storage dams in Russia. Heigl gave the plan the cover-name JOSEPH and said "work through the night and set out what you think..." It was proposed that by destroying the dams and works at Yaroslavl, Uglich and Rybinsk, two-thirds of the power supply to the Moscow area could be wiped out, bringing the various factories to a stop. For the storage dams, two Wasser-Gos could be provided, with the certain loss of their pilots.

Karl-Heinz Lange was a pre-war glider pilot of great experience. He flew one of the ten DFS 230 assault gliders in the attack on Fort Eben Emael which began Hitler's assault in the West on 10 May 1940. Later he was involved in a plan to take the Corinth Canal, an operation that was abandoned, and survived the experience of landing an assault glider on Maleme airfield under heavy ground fire during Operation MERCUR (Mercury), the invasion of Crete on 20 May 1941. In Crete, where the Luftwaffe's airborne force, XI. Fliegerkorps, suffered 30 per cent casualties and lost more than 150 Ju 52/3 transport aircraft, the situation was saved only by the destruction of weak British naval forces and the subsequent landing of troops from the sea. After this debacle, Hitler discounted the use of parachutists and glider troops for major operations.

The Luftwaffe made great use of gliders, either the small assault glider or the large Gotha 242 transport glider. Not only were transport units equipped with such relatively inexpensive but versatile aircraft, but many Gruppen of the Luftwaffe included Go 242s for general transport purposes, even as mobile workshops, as a matter of course. This meant the training (simple compared with that of a fighter or bomber pilot) of a large pool of well-qualified pilots.

After the campaign in Crete in May 1941, the several glider units that had been formed were used primarily in a supply and logistic role on the Eastern Front. From January to May 1942, they ferried in food and ammunition to the Army Group surrounded in the Kholm and Demyansk pockets. This operation resulted in heavy losses of aircraft and glider pilots as did a major operation in 1943 to ship material and evacuate wounded from the Kuban bridgehead and the Army was forced to withdraw.

Similarly, the glider units suffered over the Mediterranean where interruption of a glider-tow by British or American aircraft meant almost certain destruction, for the glider-tugs invariably released the glider in an attempt to escape.

Seeing the continued loss of trained men and of Go 242 gliders, Lange realised that the Allies' growing strength in materials and manpower made defeat for Germany inevitable. He considered that his country's situation could be saved only if Allied losses in the West could be raised to the unlikely proportion of 6 to 1 against German losses. Such a ratio, he surmised, could perhaps be



attained only by the deliberate self-sacrifice (Selbstopfer) of completely committed men who could each destroy some major Allied target or installation, such as a major warship, which would entail great loss of life. In the pool of glider pilots were many who had abandoned all hope of survival; they were canvassed by Lange who saw a possibility of making his ideas a reality. At the same time he set out a series of parameters for a suggested weapon, a simply-constructed manned glider-bomb that could be launched from a 'parent' carrier aircraft and would have such speed and accuracy that it could not be shot down by defending fighters nor by anti-aircraft gunfire. Through his pre-war acquaintance with the Führer's heroine, *Flugkapitän* Hanna Reitsch, Lange made approaches to the OKL to ensure that his ideas were given close attention.

Lange sufficiently impressed the OKL that he was transferred to the newly-formed 'Transportkolonne XI-Ost' at Hildesheim and on 3 February 1944 the formation of a 'Selbstopfer' unit was authorised, despite some opposition at OKL. Lange was obsessed with the urgency of the situation and had already begun enrolling volunteers, some 120 men who showed interest and belief in his plans. This 'Kommando Lange' had, for the present, no aircraft but *Habicht* and the fast *Stummelhabicht* sailplanes were soon offered for training. Lange and *Hptm* Jungwirth were told that that Transportkolonne XI-Ost was soon to be incorporated as an important part of another special formation, as the II. Gruppe of a Kampfgeschwader 200 under command of *Oberst* Heinrich Heigl of the RLM.

The administration of the Aufkl./Ob.d.L. was divided according to the quite different purposes of the Staffeln. Intelligence derived from the testing and trials of captured Allied aircraft and their components had no relevance to the secret air reconnaissance and delivery of sabotage and intelligence agents into enemy territory on behalf of the Abwehr. So, in the midst of internal argument the organisation was completely changed, and KG 200 formed, having already aircraft and the crews to fly them.

In January 1944, *Oblt* Lange had each of his 'SO' men volunteers sign a very carefully worded declaration on enrolment:

*"Ich melde mich hier mit freiwillig zum Einsatz mit der von Oblt Lange vorgeschlagenen Gleitbombe. Ich bin mir darüber klar, das der Einsatz mit meinem Tod enden wird".*

Translated, this meant: *"I hereby voluntarily apply for the operation of the glide-bomb proposed by Oblt Lange. It is clear to me that the operation will end in my death".* This precise wording would allow the volunteers to withdraw if they were required to fly any machine other than the specially developed aircraft envisaged by Lange or to be compelled to take part in an operation that did not meet Lange's strict requirements.

*Oberst* Heigl submitted the requirements for the 'Totaleinsatz' — 'Total Commitment' (as it is best translated) — to the OKL on 1 March 1944 and it became

evident that the Kommodore of the new KG 200 was opposed to the concept, yet basic training of the 'SO' men went ahead. Hanna Reitsch was kept in touch with events. Her opinion of Heigl was poor, believing that he was a career Staff Officer, unwilling to be supportive of any scheme that might be disliked by his superiors at OKL and the RLM. Nevertheless, Heigl astutely recognised Lange's imagination and obsessive enthusiasm and fully intended that they be put to good purpose, seeking his opinions on such proposed schemes as JOSEPH (or, in Skorzeny's terms, Operation GERTRAUD).

It is surprising that the Selbstopfer plans should be put in doubt by superior officers who had been brought up in the German 'classical' tradition. As children they had undoubtedly believed that the story of Leonidas, King of Sparta, who sacrificed his own life and those of his 300-strong royal guard in order to hold back the enormous invading Persian army at the Battle of Thermopylae in 480 BC, thereby saving his people, was worthy of admiration. In modern times, however, it seems his act was not to be emulated. A number of very senior German officers committed suicide through shame of their failures, yet some of these men could have changed the course of the war had they thought to assassinate Hitler, whom they detested, before taking their own lives. When the attempt of 20 July at Rastenberg so nearly succeeded, some senior officers of the Wehrmacht accepted the news without making any careful assessment of events and consequently were destroyed in ways that they most feared, at the hands of men who had developed torture almost to a religious rite. The success of killing the Führer could have been followed by 'self-sacrifice' of the highest order without such agonies.

Instead, it seems the willingness of Lange's 'SO' men of 4./KG 200 and men from Skorzeny's Versuchsverband was regarded as an aberration from the military code of those who (literally) 'had the courage of their convictions'. Despite the general use of the term 'Leonidas Staffel' for Lange's unit, in this instance the OKL failed (as did the USAAF reporting of it some two years later) to distinguish between 'Selbstaufopferung' and 'Selbstmord' (between self-sacrifice and suicide).

Throughout the autumn and winter of 1943-1944, Hitler's faith (and that of the OKW, for he had taken personal command of the Armed Forces) was firmly placed in the overwhelming use of the Fieseler Fi 103 Vergeltung-Eins (the retaliatory weapon, V-1) into whose development much had been applied. The programme (cover-named 'Kirsch kern' — 'Cherry Stone'), however, was in disarray. A date for the beginning of the V-1 attack on Southern England was provisionally set for 15 December, but production was far behind schedule. A hundred Fieseler Fi 103s were to have been completed in August and a total of 5,000 of the pilotless aircraft promised by this launching date but, in fact, only about 100 of the flying bombs were produced each month until the end of the year. Plans to use the weapon against the ports and cities of Southern England were very attractive to the OKW and to the Luftwaffe which would discharge



the weapon; that apart, the V-1, at first called 'Maikafer' or Maybug when it was proposed to begin operations in May 1944, could be mass-produced at minimal cost by expendable slave-labour.

Lange knew of the V-1 programme but was unimpressed by the partial destruction of English towns and the likely consequent damage to the Western Allies' morale, for the V-1 could not deliver the degree of damage — the 6 to 1 ratio — that he believed essential to bring the Allies to at least consider an armistice in the West. The other weapons systems under development, each having a potentially high loss rate, remained lower in Hitler's order of priorities. Nevertheless, although the 'Koch-Gerät' programme stagnated, development of another weapon, the 'Beethoven-Gerät', continued, albeit more slowly than could have been the case if the OKL had shown more enthusiasm. In all, some 130 of this latter weapon re-named 'Mistel' (Mistletoe — see page 92) were built although they failed to meet Lange's criteria, while in contrast a total of more than 30,000 V-1s were eventually available.

Skorzeny had outlined plans, among others, for attacks by agents on the Allied Middle East supply route to the USSR. For Operation FRANZ, Skorzeny was involved (for the first time) with the Aufkl.(F)/Ob.d.L. to drop a sabotage party south-east of Teheran under the direction of Dr Graefe of the RSHA Section VI. From later discussions with Skorzeny, Lange gained the impression that Himmler intended to control his own SS air force, just as he had command of the Waffen SS, an army which worked in conjunction with the OKH but whose oath of loyalty was to Hitler, not to the Fatherland. Operation FRANZ had been in planning by the Abwehr since 1942. Knemeyer flew a Do 215 of the 3.(F)/Ob.d.L. from Kastelli on several occasions over North Africa and from Rhodes over the Canal Zone and the Middle East as preliminary reconnaissance.

The Abwehr plan was to obtain the complicity of Kurdish dissidents to raise parties of Kurdish saboteurs to act against the oil installations around Kirkuk and Sulimaniyeh in Iraqi Kurdistan and against British lines of communication and supply, whilst German Army Group A advanced into the Caucasus.

OKW was convinced, despite intelligence from the Abwehr, that the British Army in Egypt was supplied by sea only from the West African ports. Over-sure of the effectiveness of the sea blockade, they were misled about the quantity of supplies passing northwards by land and sea from the Cape. The OKW believed that all material for Egypt was carried across Africa and, correctly, that aircraft for the Middle East took a similar route. A 'Brandenburg' unit of élite troops was given the task of locating the trans-Africa road, a journey across the Sahara Desert of 3,000 miles from Chad in French Equatorial Africa. The troops would wear British uniforms, travel in British vehicles as if a Long-Range Desert Group, and even be supported for tactical reconnaissance by a captured Spitfire. The column set out in June 1942 but Rommel's Panzerarmee Afrika was by then involved in

battle at Alam el Halfa and the Brandenburger's largely negative intelligence was no longer of great value or interest. But the idea of disrupting Allied rear areas remained an attractive concept to the Abwehr, even after the defeat at El Alamein in October, re-appearing later as a rather different plan called ETAPPENHASE ('Hopping Hare') as related earlier.

By January 1943, the German drive to the south-east had been halted by a Red Army counter-offensive but the Abwehr continued to plan the arming of the Kurds to attack the southern Allied supply route to the Soviet Union and to set up bases for further operations. Some men of Skorzeny's special formations might have been used, but it is more likely that the troops for FRANZ would again have been 'Brandenburgers' trained in winter mountain-warfare conditions.

At the beginning of 1944, the Operations Staff of the Luftwaffe seriously considered plans for using the Koch-Gerät for an air attack on one of the Allies' naval bases, Gibraltar or (preferably) Scapa Flow, anchorage of the British Home Fleet. Had Lange been fully aware of these plans they would surely have gladdened his heart for, although his proposed glide-bomb was not ready for action, here could be the opportunity for a strike to cause maximum Allied losses for a relatively small self-sacrifice by the Luftwaffe.

There was no doubt that British capital ships would be used to provide enormous gunnery barrages to protect the launching of the expected 'Second Front' in Western Europe. There would be an enormous, almost unbearable blow to British morale — the only problem still to be solved was the provision of a Selbstopfer weapon which would not be easily destroyed by air or anti-aircraft defences when flown by the inexperienced SO men. No thought was given to the possibility of survival of the pilot; it would be essential that each weapon was flown by only one man to avoid any distraction or change of mind by a crewman.

At OKL there seems to have been some uncertainty about which weapons system would be most satisfactory; only Lange's as yet incomplete glide-bomb met the criteria for immediate success, for there could be no second chance if the operation failed. Probably for this reason Lange's original concept was given the full support of Hanna Reitsch.





**54 Above:** *Waffen-SS* Obersturmbannführer Otto Skorzeny poses with a dour-looking Mussolini shortly before his departure from the Gran Sasso. Skorzeny wears *Luftwaffe* tropical uniform with Hauptmann's insignia



**55 Above:** Oberst Heinrich Heigl, the first Kommodore of KG 200 in a formal portrait probably taken in early 1944

**56 Below:** Major Hans Jungwirth, Gruppenkommandeur of Stab II./KG 200 between 21 February and 11 July 1944. He later distinguished himself in the ground fighting against the Allied airborne forces after the landings at Arnhem



**57 Below:** The highly-decorated commander of I(II)/KG 200, Hptm Friedrich Schäfer, who led the unit between 21 February-8 June 1944





## THE SPOILS OF WAR

### US bombers in Luftwaffe service

The first Boeing B-17 'Flying Fortresses' of the USAAF stationed in England were assigned to three heavy Bombardment Groups, the Bomb Group being the basic operational tactical bomber formation. Early Fortresses (B-17E, the 'offensive Fortress') of the VIII Bomber Command were soon joined by the improved B-17F. Their operations began in August 1942 with a series of attacks on U-boat pens and harbour installations in France and a few raids on Germany.

The Technical Staff of the Luftwaffe were greatly interested in the developments made in the sequence of B-17Fs at Modification Centers in the United States and of the changes to the aircraft's armament. Although American losses mounted, the Germans were unable to assess performance, but they were able to build up a sizeable reserve of Wright Cyclone engines and Hamilton-Standard propellers. A British spokesman for the Air Ministry warned "...that the flower of America's regular Army Air Force is not squandered on a type of operation that ex-

perience would judge unwise." The VIII Bomber Command, however, was determined to develop defensive tactics by which formations of Fortresses could use their concentrated fire-power to protect them from fighter attack.

Of the growing number of British and American aircraft brought down, few were landed without serious airframe damage. Usually if a Fortress made a 'wheels-up' landing, the ventral ball-turret and its heavy internal supporting structure were forced upwards, breaking or distorting the fuselage beyond repair. The Germans were first able to make a full examination of a B-17F after 41-24585 *Wulfe-Hound* (an F-27-BO — note also the 'c' in *Wulfe*) of the 303rd Bomb Group landed almost intact at Leeuwarden in Friesland on 12 December 1942. After a few checks, the aircraft was flown to the E-Stelle-2 at Rechlin where repairs were made, and it was refinished beneath in RLM 27 Yellow, the standard for captured machines, with national markings and the Stammkennzeichen DL+XC.

Captured aircraft and relevant aviation equipment initially came under the control of the Director of Technical Intelligence on *Feldmarschall* Milch's Staff, *Oberst-Ingenieur* Dietrich Schwenke. In 1940 he had established at Rechlin a 'Beute' — Booty — Testing Station, Erprobungsstelle 2, which, now with several associated experimental stations, was under the command of *Oberst*

**58 Above:** Major Egon Mayer, Kommodore of JG 2, poses on the wing of B-17F-35-DL 42-3190 of the 94th Bomb Group, 331st Bomb Squadron, which he brought down near Evreux in France on 14 July 1943. USAAF Captain Kee H. Harrison and his crew escaped injury, but were captured and spent the rest of the war in Stalag XVIIIB. Allegedly named 'Mr Five by Five' (not visible on photographs) the aircraft was recovered as the second B-17 to enter Luftwaffe service. It may have later carried the KG 200 code A3+BB



Edgar Peterson. British and American heavy bombers were of particular interest to the Luftwaffe authorities who had permitted the design, then abandonment, of heavy bombers but at that time had for comparison only four-engined Fw 200, Ju 90 and Ju 290 aircraft, developed from civil types.

After a period of evaluation *Wulfe-Hound* was demonstrated at training and fighter stations in Germany, the Low Countries and France during the summer of 1943, for attack training. Schwenke piloted the aircraft and found that it flew "...extraordinarily easily. You can talk normally in the cockpit with the co-pilot." Compared with the older RAF B-17C Fortress I, it was reported that the B-17F had an additional 1,500 lb of armour. This and the resistance of the Fortresses to long bursts of fire from German fighters led to an air-armament conference discussing the tactics for shooting down bombers. The careful examinations at Rechlin were summarised by Schwenke: "Here is a presentation that I have had made on the various installations of the (fuel) tanks in the six four-engined models that are present in England and the USA, and in a Russian."

Several diagrams of Allied bombers indicated where the fuel tanks were positioned so that German fighter pilots would know where to aim. Milch picked this up; looking at a diagram he asked: "Where are the tanks? Here you can say, in the four-engined aeroplanes between the two motors. Only the Liberator has nothing there".

He also asked what ammunition would pierce the B-17s armour plate. "What are the calibres", he persisted, "will 2 centimetres punch through? Not always, but 2 centimetres is pretty good. Three centimetres seems to me to be always more substantial... When we have enough armour plates, we have them shot at in Rechlin — We'll get the original armour plates from the Tommies and from the Americans."

DL+XC was consequently marked with tapes to show the areas of greatest vulnerability to cannon-fire and, following trials and experiments at Deelen in June 1943, German fighter tactics were changed so that attacks would be made from directly ahead of the bomber, instead of the 'traditional' approach from the flank and below. In time, VIII Bomber Command required modifications, including additional nose guns in new and already operational aircraft for increased defensive fire-power.

A US Interpretation Report recorded the presence of a B-17 at Rechlin on 21 April and a first sighting in the air was on 11 May, by B-17 crews some 20 miles off St. Nazaire, then again over the Channel coast on 11, 25 and 28 June 1943; this was almost certainly *Wulfe-Hound*, but more enemy-flown B-17s were soon to appear as lightly-damaged aircraft were repaired. There was as yet no suspicion of the Fortresses landing for other reasons than engine or airframe damage but later, when bomber crews found that their defensive formations were of little deterrence to German fighters and that they were to face almost certain death, the situation changed.

On 4 October, a 2nd Lt Lakin reported, "Capt Helstrom's ship was last seen as the Group formation

dispersed to go down through the undercast on the route back. The ship peeled off in a normal manner and seemed under perfect control." Whether the B-17 was deliberately flown back towards the French coast to surrender or because of instrument failure has never been made clear. Nothing was heard of the crew until reports were received from the French that Capt Helstrom and all his crew were taken prisoners when the aircraft crash-landed.

The loss of B-17F-111-BO, 42-30604, *Badger Beauty V* of the 350th BS, 100th BG, was the subject of inquiry by the Adjutant General's Office into February 1944 but seemingly no report was published.

Over northern Germany, numbers of B-17s dropped out of formation with relatively light damage and headed for the Baltic coast and neutral Sweden. When they left the relative safety of their formations, German fighter pilots often left them to make a slow descent, knowing they had no hope of reaching their English bases. So, slightly damaged B-17Fs were refurbished, partly repainted and passed on to the Versuchsverband Ob.d.L. (later to KG 200).

The few sightings by Fortress crews caused some concern at Eighth Air Force headquarters where the enemy-flown B-17s were thought to present a serious threat; far more was made of these events than could be sustained, yet American Intelligence feared devious new tactics by the Luftwaffe. In fact some of the enemy flights were by aircraft moving from one airfield to another, and close approaches almost certainly from Luftwaffe bravado, not from any particular tactical ploy.

It was feared that the Luftwaffe Fortresses, by 'infiltrating' the bomber formations, would attack them with rockets or other weapons. The resumé to a report by HQ Eighth Air Force summarised the dangers: "...a rocket similar to the *Panzerfaust* at short range would almost certainly cripple a bomber." Air-to-air bombing was mentioned with little conviction but 'intrusion' and breaking-up of the defensive pattern was taken seriously — so seriously that VIII Bomber Command required the application of a 'marking of the day', usually applied to the fuselage in removable paint as a 'safe' means of identification at close range. A further suggestion was that the enemy aircraft could be 'monitoring' (whatever that might be) radio communication, but it is unlikely that the Germans gained much from radio chatter among the American aircraft. Crews were notorious for such talk on bombing missions and there is no doubt that vulnerability was somewhat increased if information was given about targets or route changes. An ex-RAF pilot has told the author that he and his fellows, under radio 'black-out' as fighter-escort to US bombers, were greatly surprised at the constant conversations between the bombers over enemy territory.

The Luftwaffe lacked large-capacity long-range transport aircraft, despite the early development of the Fw 200 and the Ju 90 four-engined transports. This may have been partly due to the OKL foreseeing no need for transport over great distances while the Luftwaffe was still tied to the Army for control, and partly due to its widespread



use of transport gliders. The Western Allies, quite fortuitously, had an enormous pool of twin-engined C-47 Dakotas for transport of bulky loads and numbers of men. The C-47 could not be matched by the older, slow Ju 52, frequently used as a glider-tug for relatively short-range flights. The only German long-range multi-engined aircraft was the He 177 *Greif* bomber which suffered many technical problems with its coupled engines.

The big Junkers transports were the most useful for the delivery and quick turn-around so often needed on the Eastern Front. A 'Trapoklappe' hydraulic loading platform and ramp in the rear fuselage supported the aircraft, as required, with the fuselage floor horizontal and was large enough to allow vehicles to be driven or winched up and down. Such a facility was, of course, quite impossible to provide in the Fortress whose principal access/exit was the rear fuselage door, ideally positioned for sequential static-line parachute drops of men or of relatively small items of supplies: explosives, ammunition and the like. Consequently, the Versuchsverband and KG 200 were partly equipped with modified He 111 aircraft for static-line parachute drops as were the less suitable Ju 88 and Ju 188, (presumably with passenger hatches in the gondolas) but each had limited internal space. This problem was ingeniously overcome at a later date by the invention by an *Oblt* Paulus of his 'Personen-Abwurf Gerät'.

To *Wulfe-Hound* three more B-17s were added in 1943:

B-17F-85-BO, 42-30048 (Lt D. Wheat, 544 BS/384 BG) *Flak Dancer*, forced-landed near Laon on 26 June and re-marked SJ+KY.

B-17F-35-DL, 42-3190 (Capt K. Harrison, 333BS/94 BG) *Mr Five by Five* on 14 July, and

B-17F-90-BO, 42-30146 (Lt T. Palmer, 333BS/94 BG, *Down and Go*) two weeks later.

So far as is known, these aircraft retained their US Basic Camouflage and it was their finishes that were first of interest to the author, who then continued research into the operations of these aircraft of KG 200. According to several writers, the captured Fortresses were known as Dornier Do 200 (a non-existent type). So said Peter Stahl in his book *KG 200 - The True Story* (Jane's, London, 1981), but David Kahn in *Hitler's Spies* (Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1978) refers to their cover-name as Do 288 — a possible error in typing? Whether the Abwehr, with its almost paranoid desire for secrecy, called the Fortresses by some false number is not known; certainly KG 200 aircrews always marked their logbooks 'B-17' and the aircraft was so described in the monthly Order of Battle of KG 200. A draft Air Ministry Report of early 1945 also referred to 'Do 200' but it is almost certain that the source was an interrogation of a prisoner-of-war who stated that the Fortresses at Echterdingen were never known by any other name than Do 200; his evidence was complete nonsense.

Distant sightings of unidentified B-17s continued; on 1 December a 'strange' (sic) aircraft was seen over the Channel bearing tail-fin markings of a square and D above identification letter B. The square marking was

that of the 3rd Bomb Division, as carried by B-17F-111-BO 42-30604 *Badger Beauty V*. That aircraft's individual tail code letter was, however, 'T', and although captured, it had been too severely damaged by fire on the ground for it to have been the aircraft in question. *Badger Beauty V* was taken to Orly, near Paris, for repair but was never rebuilt and when recaptured in 1944 still lacked a fuselage forward of the wing leading edge. The aircraft was later preserved in Boeing's Museum. Meanwhile, *Wulfe-Hound* was handed over to the Versuchsverband Ob.d.L. on 19 September 1943.

Sightings of 'strange' aircraft continued for some time. On 1 December 1943, a B-24 joined a formation of the US 44th Bomb Group (also flying B-24s) over the Channel but turned away towards Holland when 12 to 15 miles from the coast. This B-24 was reported as bearing the Group letter 'D' of the 392nd Bomb Group (which did not fly its first operational mission until 9 December) and call letter 'B'. All too often these 'strange' aircraft were merely stragglers trying to regain the relative safety of a friendly formation.

Whether upon transfer to the Vers.Verb.Ob.d.L. the first B-17s were allocated to the 1. Staffel for 'operational trials', or directly to 2. Staffel (the 'Gruppe Gartenfeld') to be employed on clandestine operations by the Kommandos, is not clear, but they were very soon in operational use by Kommando Olga. More captured B-17s were issued by the E-Stelle Rechlin during the latter half of 1943. Another, B-17G-1-VE, 42-39759, *Pickle Dropper*, of the 390th BG, captured at the very close of the year, was taken to Chateaufort but never flew for the Luftwaffe.

The B-17s were very quickly put into service with the 2./Versuchsverband — on rare occasions over the Eastern Front, but generally in the South and West (by Kommandos Toska, Carmen and Olga) for, at dusk or dawn, their distinctive outline might provide some protection from fighters at a distance. In September, American aircrews reported enemy-flown B-17s trailing their unescorted formations during raids on Bologna, 2 September, and Viterbo on 5 September. Perhaps the same Fortress was that seen bearing a 'square marking' on the tail over Marseille-Istres le Tube on 16 November or after a formation bombed Athens-Eleusis airfield two days later following as far as Aigino before turning away to the north.

On 9 April 1944, B-17G-10-VE 42-39974 of the 731BS/452BG, flown by 2nd Lt Roener, broke away from formation and headed for Sweden while returning from a raid on Warnemünde. A young Danish eye-witness, J.M. Larsen, related:

"On that day in April 1944 I was standing on the first floor of my parents' house at Holte. I heard a noise from the engine of a heavy aircraft, looked out of an open skylight and shouted to my father, 'Flying Fortress!' — one could not be mistaken by its profile. The Flying Fortress was between Vejlesø and Furesø (lakes) on a northerly heading. It then turned to a westerly heading and it reappeared in the direction of Værloese.



"Then I heard engine noise from a German fighter and a salvo was fired, presumably 20 mm, subsequently I didn't see the aircraft airborne again.

"I borrowed a bicycle and drove towards Vaerloese. When I got over the hill at the 'soldier's path' near Soendersoc (lake) I suddenly entered a taxiway newly made by the Germans and followed it almost to Bringe but couldn't see any big aircraft on the field.

"I drove back and passed two farmhouses on my right and on my left I had the big yellow building which at that time served as depot for equipment. Just west of this building there was inside of the fence a steep slope towards the grass field itself — and here a B-17 was parked with its tail towards the fence and its nose towards the field. Apparently the aircraft was unharmed apart from a missing hatch on top of the body about amidships and from a flat port main wheel.

"I recorded the letters of identification and serial number of the aircraft on the back of a matchbox which I unfortunately later lost.

"At that time I was a little involved in the underground activities and it was my intention that a report on the landing via the illegal mail service should have reached the American Embassy in Stockholm but this I didn't manage to get done as I on another occasion was arrested by Gestapo on the 10th of May and kept interned until the 5th of May 1945."

A member of the Danish Resistance took a similar route and took a very indistinct photograph of the B-17 before it was moved away from the airfield perimeter. Temporary repairs were soon put in hand and the aircraft was flown to Rechlin, from where it was allocated to the II./KG 200 a few weeks later.

Concern at HQ Eighth Air Force that B-17s were lost when they appeared to have suffered no great damage, and were landed seemingly intact, would probably have been alleviated had they known more of the circumstances. For instance, Lt Pounds, the pilot of B-17G-15-DL, 43-37827, *Wally's Wheels*, of the 422nd Bomb Squadron, 305th BG, over Berlin on 5 December 1944, radioed to his formation commander that one engine was put out by flak and because of excessive demand for power, two others went out of commission. He reported that his crew would bail out but they remained with the plane because one was wounded. Pounds landed safely without further damage but tragedy struck soon afterwards. While the crew were awaiting transport to an interrogation centre, the radio-operator, T/Sgt Robert Phillips, was accidentally shot by a German guard trying to assert his authority by waving his gun in the aircrew's faces. Phillips died soon afterwards. The aircraft was subsequently recovered with the fuselage centre section destroyed, possibly by the Germans themselves, at Weimar/Kolleda in May 1945.

A Fortress given the KG 200 unit code 'A3+BB' has been something of a mystery. It had a varied career with the 2. Staffel. According to a prisoner captured at the Wadi Tamet, this aircraft flew (possibly from Bergamo) with supplies for Lager I and returned undamaged to France.

The logbook of von Pechmann listed the aircraft as a

B-17G and it appears that its crew believed it to be so when it was shot down by the Allies in March 1945. An Allied investigating team confirmed what remained of the wrecked aircraft as a B-17G. German records at the Imperial War Museum Library, in London, however, give its Werk Nummer as 42-3097 which would identify it as a Douglas-built B-17F-25-DL. This was serving with the 549th Bomb Squadron, 385th Bomb Group, and named *The Ground Hog* when it was shot down by flak on 30 December 1943 and crashed at Fresnicourt. A great number of modifications were made to B-17s in production and in service, but most that were visible externally concerned additions to nose armament. The only obvious distinguishing feature of the B-17G series was the addition of a 'chin' turret beneath the nose.

As a matter of passing interest, at Rechlin on 16 June 1944, the test pilot Hans-Werner Lerche flew a B-17 towing a DFS 230 glider.

The Luftwaffe also operated a small number of B-24 Liberators, the first of which to be captured was B-24H-5-DT 41-28641 of the 732BS/453BG (2nd Lt J.R. Turner) which landed with a badly wounded crew member after attacking the airfield at Meslay in France on 5 February 1944, on the first operational mission by the Group. The aircraft was eventually taken on charge by KG 200 as A3+KB and employed on transport duties, including, according to witnesses, a single flight to Rhodes-Gadurra. It was recovered in May 1945 at Salzburg.

Another B-24 was *Sunshine*, a B-24H-5-FO (42-52106) of the 719th Bomb Squadron, 449th Bomb Group, Fifteenth Air Force.

On 29 March 1944, the 449th Bomb Group, based at Grottaglie, Italy, received the order for a maximum effort mission against the marshalling yards at Bolzana, close to the Italian-Austrian border. The marshalling yard had been targeted because it was an important part of the German supply route over the Brenner Pass into Italy. The maximum effort order meant that all aircraft would fly, including *Sunshine*. The war-weary B-24H had begun its career with the 716th Squadron, but was now attached to the 719th Squadron. *Sunshine* was flown by 2nd Lt Gifford T. Hemphill. An earlier mission had been aborted due to engine failure so the ground crew worked throughout the night to repair the engine with parts salvaged from other more severely damaged Liberators. By dawn the engine was repaired and the Liberator was ready for the mission against Bolzano. At 08.21 hrs on 29 March 1944 *Sunshine* took off on what would be its final flight in American hands. The nose-gunner, S/Sgt Orel M. Harper, later recalled:

"En route to the target we saw a squadron of Messerschmitt Bf 109s off to our right. We tightened the formation to maximise our mutual firepower and braced our selves for their attack. For some unknown reason, the fighters chose not to attack. We pressed on towards Bolzano but before reaching the target our aircraft's defective engine once again malfunctioned and had to be feathered. With only three good engines we began to lose speed and altitude. We were unable



to keep up with the formation and knew we would be easy prey for enemy fighters. Fighters waited for a formation to break up, then singled out and brought down the stragglers. We were now a straggler.

"Our replacement navigator, Samuel Guttenberg, was flying his first mission with us that day and hastily plotted a course to the nearest point of safety — Switzerland. We salvoed our load of five 1,000 pound bombs onto the side of a barren mountain, and hoped for the best.

"We scanned the sky for enemy fighters, but saw none. We continued to lose altitude and the lower we flew, the more inhospitable and ominous the mountains below us became. We continued our course toward Switzerland and just when we thought we would make it a burst of flak, possibly from Venegono, damaged a second engine causing the B-24 to begin losing altitude rapidly.

"There was an excited exchange over the intercom and a brief moment of indecision whether to jump or stay with the bomber. The navigator shouted to the pilot that we were about two minutes from Switzerland. We decided to stay with the Liberator while the pilot tried to stretch our rapid descent enough to cross the border into Switzerland and safety. We sighted an airfield we thought was across the border and prepared for an emergency landing."

The aircraft made a hard landing at Venegono airfield near Varese, only three minutes flying time from the safety of Locarno-Magadino airstrip in southern Switzerland.

The Italians and Germans at Venegono discovered that the Liberator was basically undamaged. With two replacement engines and some minor repairs to the tail section, *Sunshine* would be completely airworthy. A Luftwaffe Fieseler 156 brought in two test pilots with B-24 experience to Venegono who would ferry out the Liberator once repairs were completed. Balkenkreuze were painted on *Sunshine*, replacing the American national insignia and a large white theatre identification band was added to the fuselage.

"We were immediately taken to a small building, stripped of our clothing and given a two-piece burlap garment to wear. The Italian officers in charge of us had called the Germans and we were taken outside and made to stand in a field under guard until the Nazis arrived. Before long they came, put us in an open Army truck and transported us through downtown Milano (Milan) to the city's jail. The following morning we were again transported some distance to another town and another jail. After several days of solitary, our clothes were finally returned to us and we were put aboard a Junkers Ju-52 and flown to Venegono where we saw *Sunshine* again — for the last time.

"At the airfield we were lined up against the Liberator and, while German motion picture cameras filmed us, were told to show the German people that we were happily coming over to their side. The film was of all ten of the crew walking toward the front of the aircraft as though we had just landed and deplaned. I made

the Germans unhappy by giving the 'V for Victory' hand signal and was warned not to do it again."

After the filming the crew was transferred to the Luftwaffe Interrogation Centre at Oberursel and finally to Stalag Luft 1. A few days after the propaganda film was finished, two Luftwaffe pilots flew the B-24 via München-Riem to Rechlin. After a short evaluation period, *Sunshine* was transferred to the Erprobungsstelle der Luftwaffe, Aussenstelle Werneuchen, the radio and radar research centre.

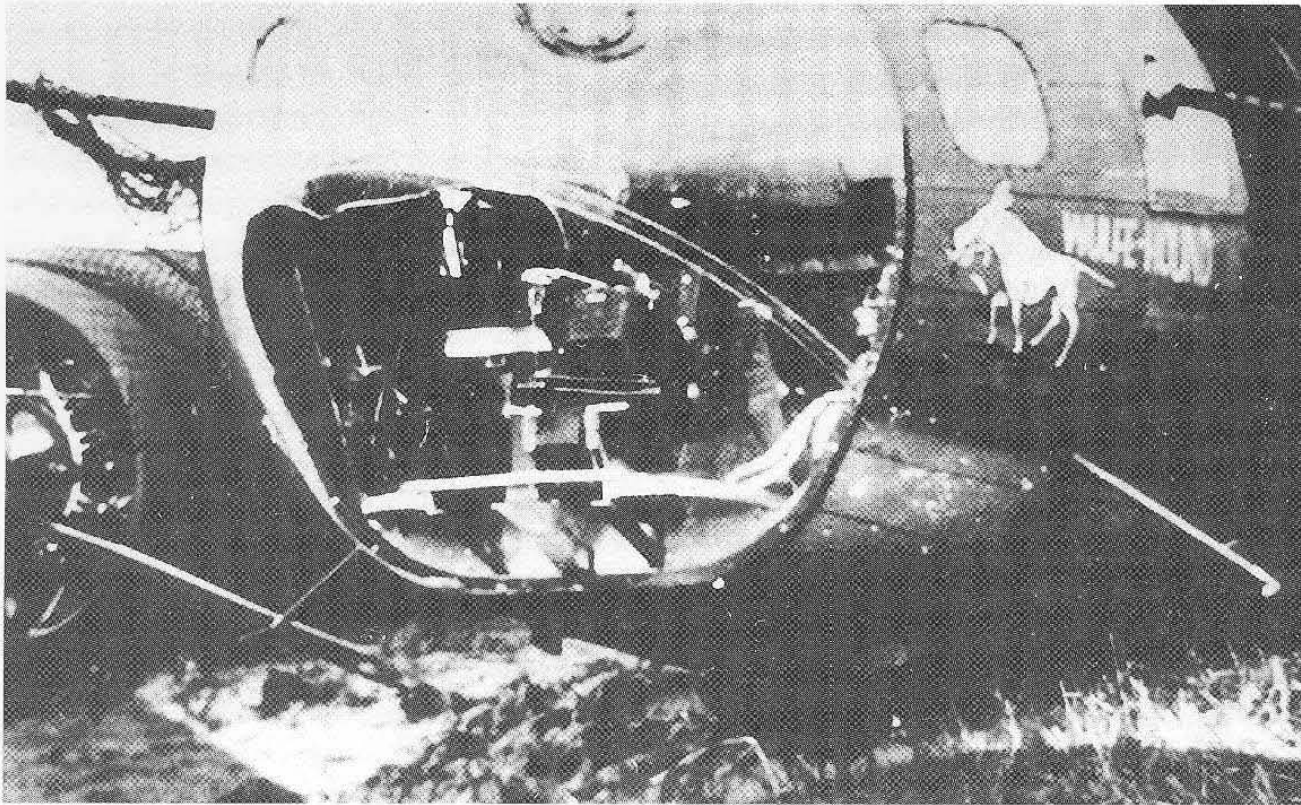
One B-24 survived in Luftwaffe service for just a few days. B-24H-15-FO 42-52627 of the 453rd Bomb Group, 735th Bomb Squadron, flown by Lt William Banias, was damaged by flak during a raid against München on 12 July 1944, and tried to escape to Switzerland, but landed in error at Réguisheim, some 20 kms short of their destination. The crew became prisoners and the Luftwaffe set to work to restore the Liberator to airworthy condition. Several days later, fully repaired and wearing German markings, the aircraft was almost ready for take-off when a flight of US P-38 Lightnings appeared and strafed the bomber setting it on fire. It was a total loss.

Allied photo-reconnaissance aircraft were of particular interest to the Versuchsverband Ob.d.L. A single Spitfire PR Mk.XI, MB945, and a Lockheed F-5E Lightning were flown by the E-Stelle, then by the 2. and 3. Staffeln of the Versuchsverband Ob.d.L. Both were marked with the unit code 'T9' for 'operational trials'. The Spitfire had been flown by Lt Franklyn van Wart of the US 14th PRS/7th PRG, when he was posted MIA on 1 March 1944. He apparently became disoriented above clouds, made a good landing on an airfield near Aschersleben and was made prisoner. His aircraft gained the code T9+BB.

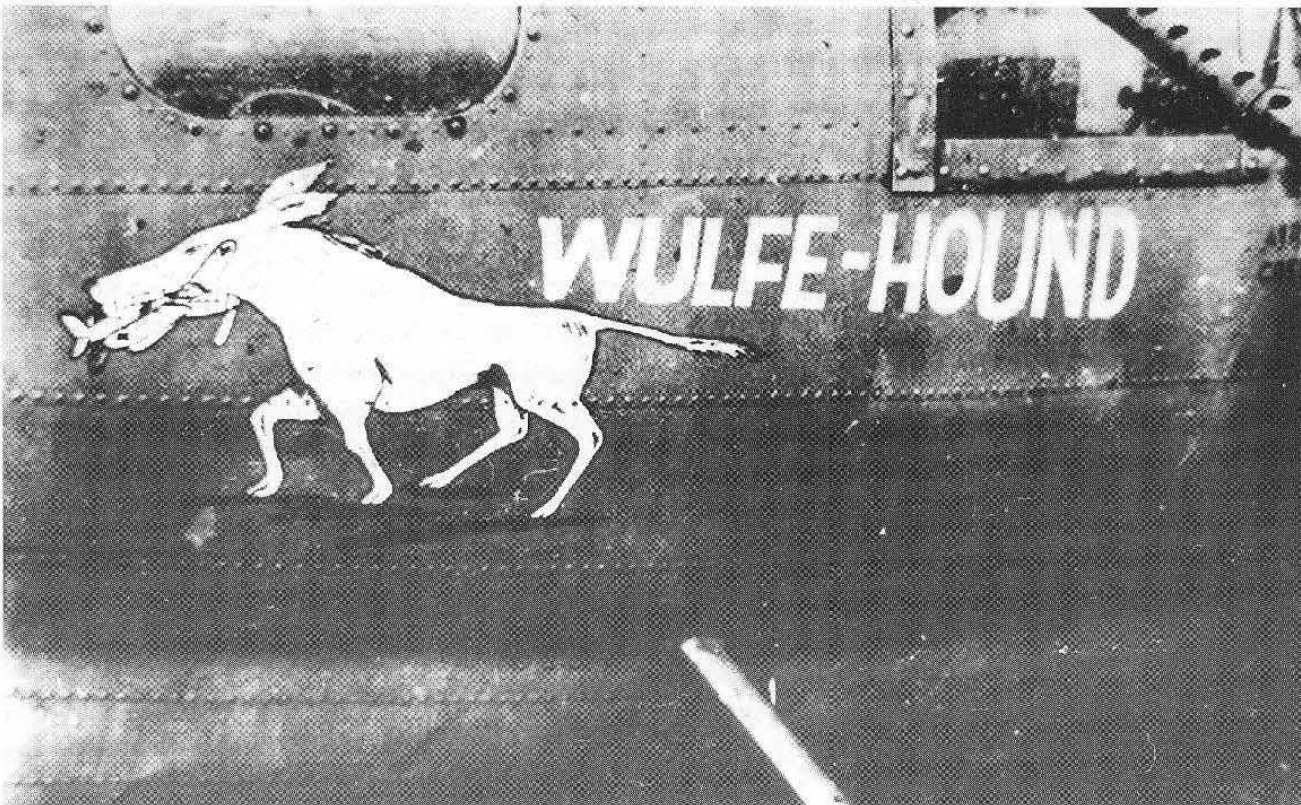
Only two Lockheed Lightnings are known to have served with the Luftwaffe. Oddly, each has a unique claim to fame. One, a P-38G, which carried the Luftwaffe code T9+XB, remains unidentified, but may be the aircraft from the US 14th FG, Twelfth Air Force, which landed in error on Sicily on 12 July 1943. It was used, carrying Italian markings, by an Italian pilot, a Col Tondi, to shoot down at least one USAAF B-17 on 11 August 1943. Allegedly the inferior Italian fuel soon caused the engines to seize, but this could have been overcome by the Luftwaffe.

The other Lightning, a brand-new F-5E, 44-23725, was purloined by 2nd Lt Martin J. Monti in Pomigliano where it was in the care of the 354th Air Service Squadron. Monti used it to defect to the Germans (the only USAAF fighter pilot ever to do so) on 13 October 1944, landing at Milan-Lonate airfield at 15.00 hours. The aircraft was entirely undamaged. Twelve days later, wearing yellow undersides and Luftwaffe insignia, it was delivered to Germany. Soon afterwards it was incorporated into the 2./Versuchsverband Ob.d.L., (the Zirkus Rosarius) as T9+MK. Both the aircraft and its original pilot were recaptured in May 1945, (at Schongau, Germany and Milan, Italy, respectively). Monti was later court-martialled and served a long prison sentence.





**59:** The first Flying Fortress to be captured by the Luftwaffe in usable condition was this B-17F-27-BO, 41-24585, of the 303rd Bomb Group, 360th Bomb Squadron, which was brought down on 12 December 1942 near Leeuwarden, Holland, during a raid on Rouen. Lt Paul F. Flickinger and his crew were all captured. It is evident that one of the first actions by the Germans was to break the nose cone in order to gain access to the Norden bombsight



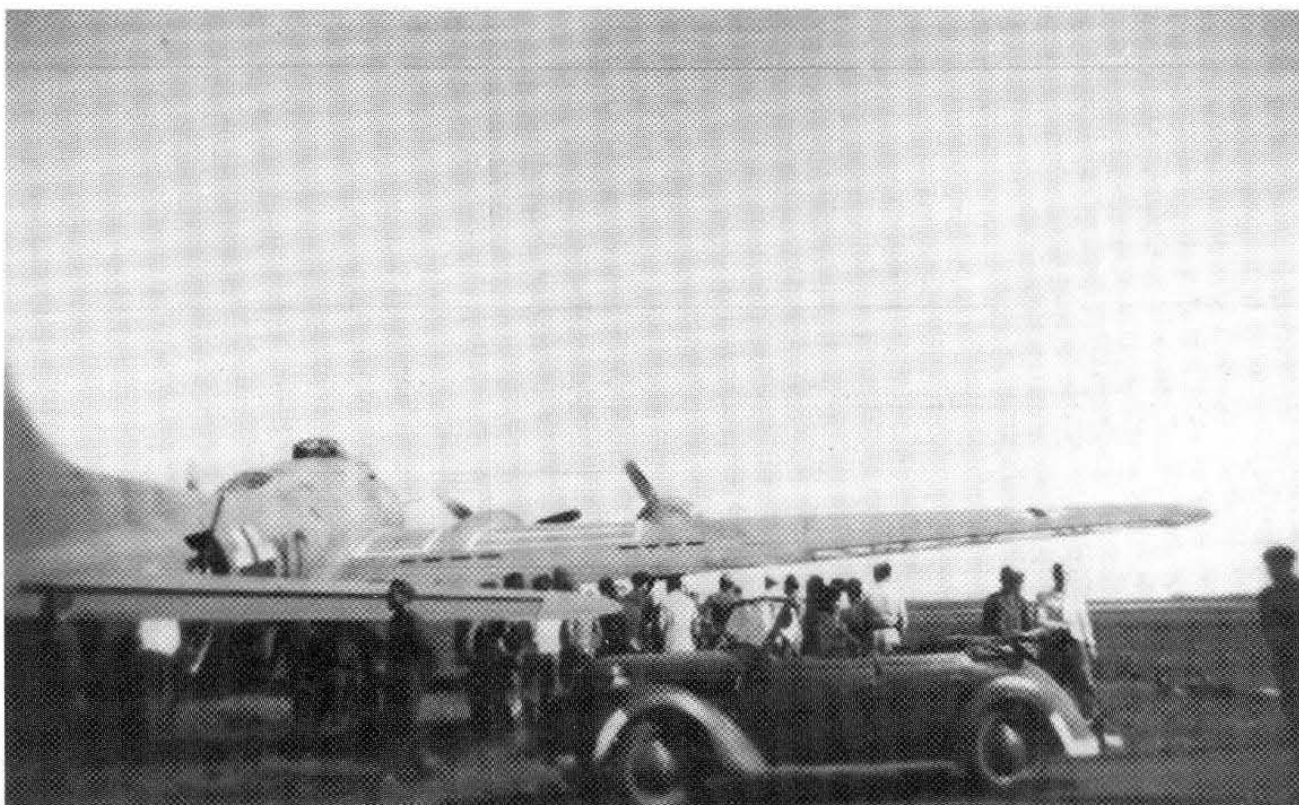
**60:** This view of the port side nose artwork of Wulfe-Hound shows the actual spelling of the name which is usually recorded wrongly. Coded PU-B at the time of its capture, the aircraft was allocated the Luftwaffe Stammkennzeichen DL+XC. Following repairs it was sent on an extensive tour of Luftwaffe fighter units to demonstrate to the pilots what they were up against



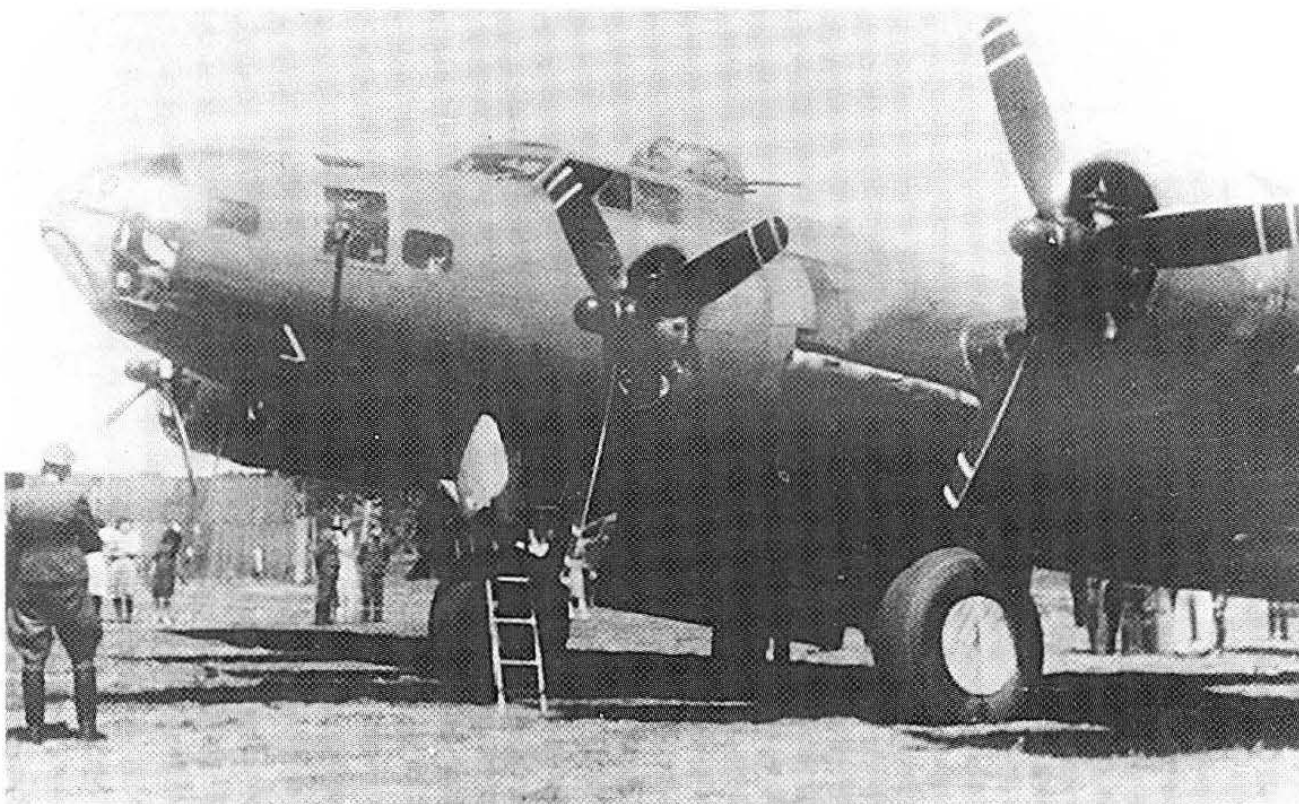
**61:** Curious Luftwaffe on-lookers gather round Wulfe-Hound during one of many visits to Luftwaffe bases. The propeller blades have now acquired some highly unusual safety stripes



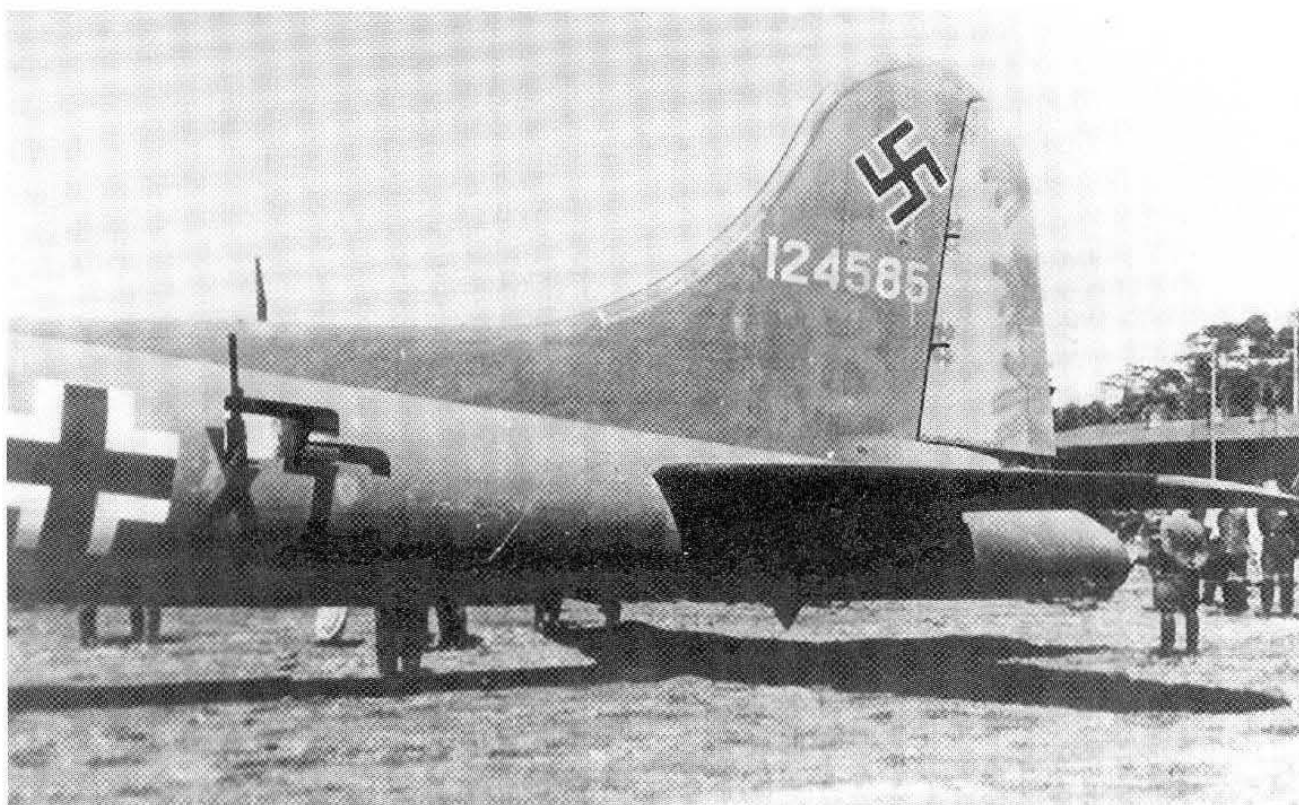
**62:** In this view of Wulfe-Hound it can be seen that although German insignia and the Stammkennzeichen DL+XC has been applied, the aircraft has retained its US camouflage of Olive Drab 41 and Medium Green 42 blotches. The vulnerable inboard wing fuel tanks have been outlined in white tape for the benefit of Luftwaffe fighter pilots. Later aircraft had outboard 'Tokyo' fuel tanks. The car is a convertible Wanderer W24



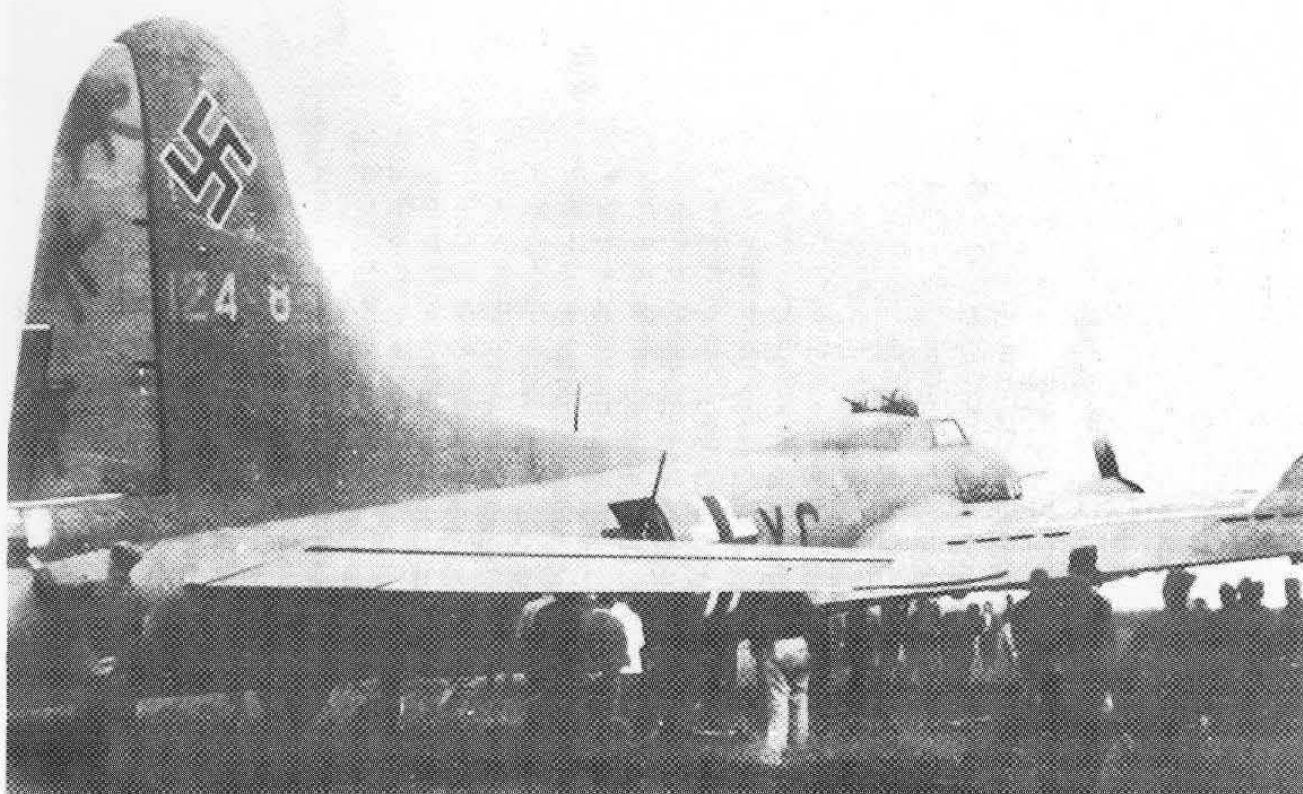
**63:** Another view of 41-24585, taken in mid-1943 at Wittmundhafen, with the locations of the outboard engine oil tanks marked out. It would be interesting to know why warning stripes were painted on the propeller blades by the Germans when they were so conspicuously absent on their home-produced aircraft



**64:** Also at Wittmundhafen, this view of the tail of Wulfe-Hound clearly shows that most of the original US markings and camouflage were retained with only necessary additions to identify the aircraft as a 'friendly'. The remains of the individual call letter 'B' remain just visible on the fin. A waist-gun is still in position. Note how the Olive Drab paint has faded on the rudder leaving the Medium Green blotches looking much darker by contrast



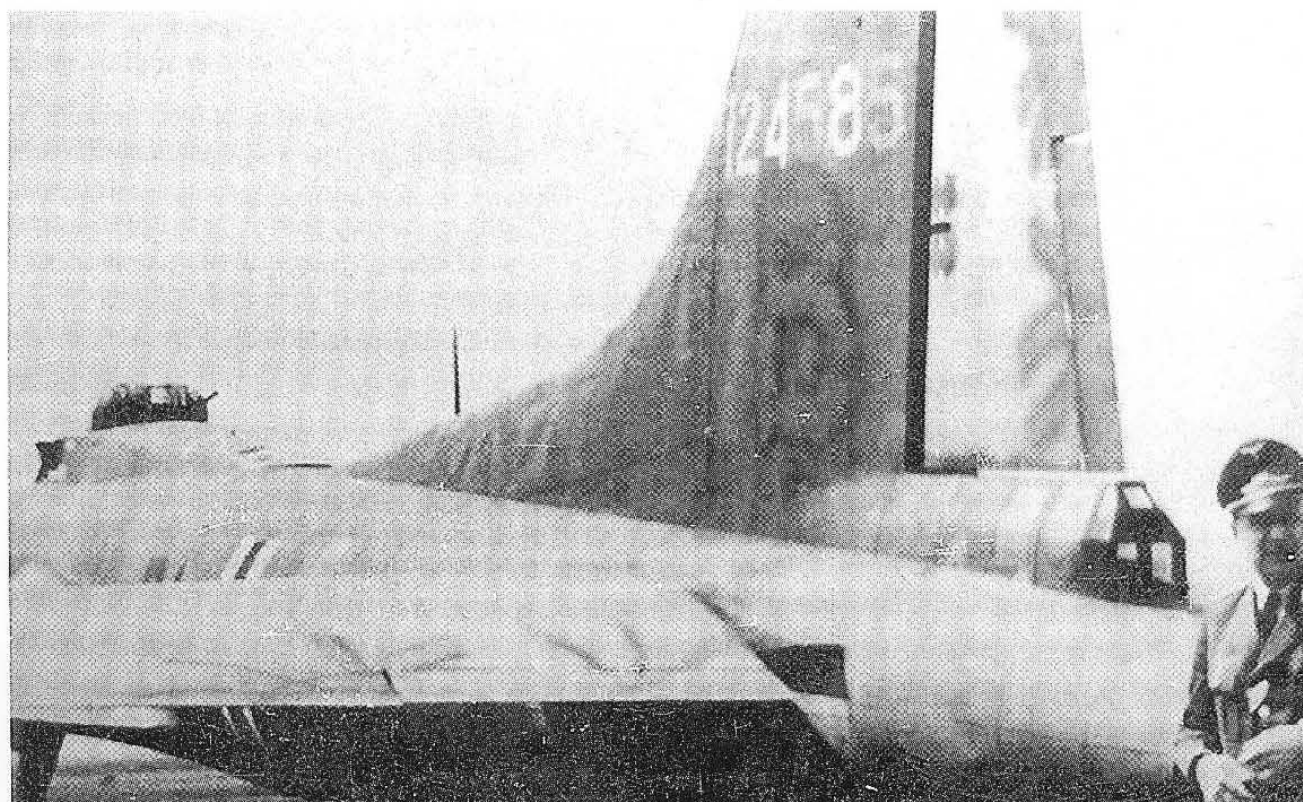




**65:** Wulfe-Hound was the object of much interest to the Luftwaffe as this and the next five pictures clearly show. Here a starboard side view



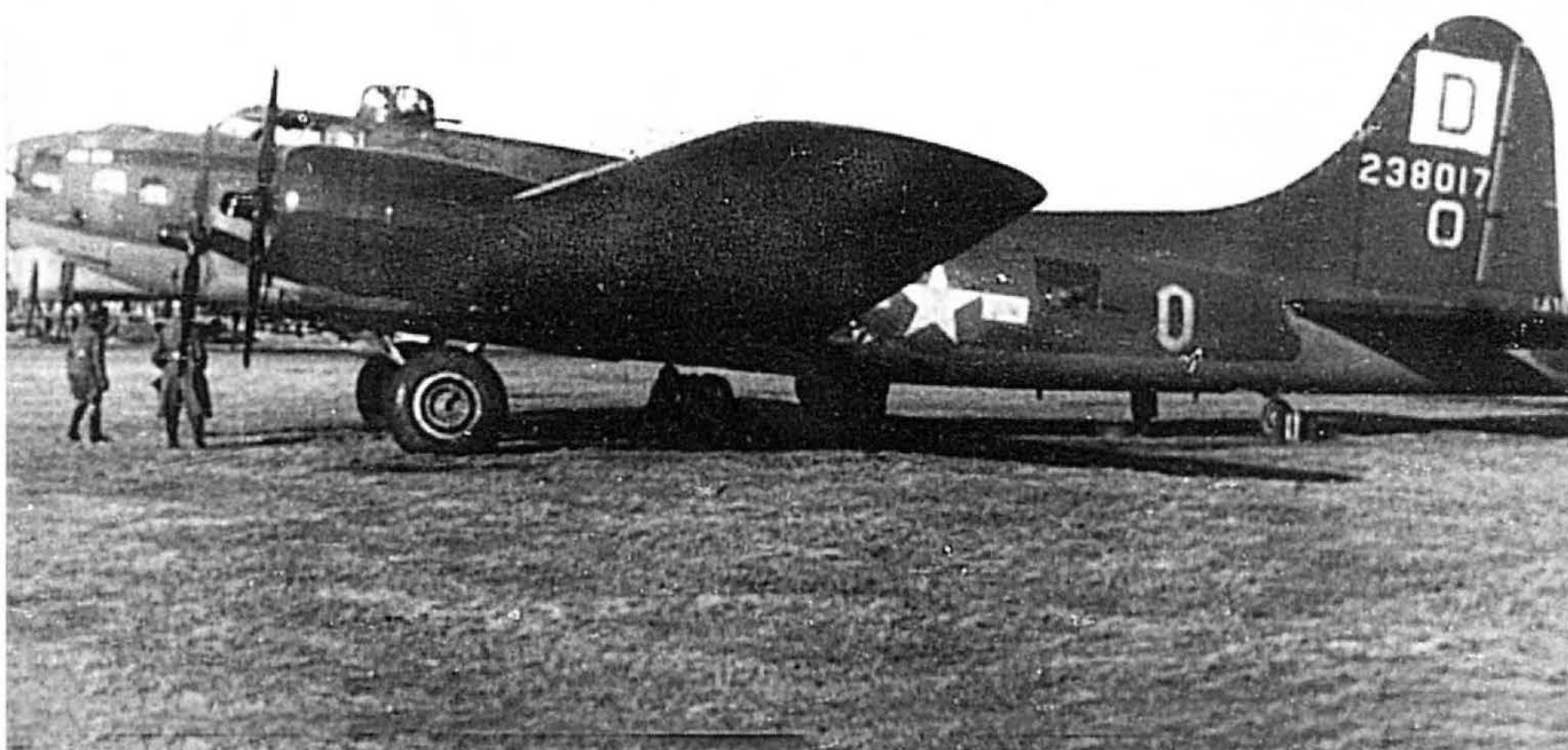
**66:** Also at Wittmundhafen, ground crew found the Fortress radically different to anything in the Luftwaffe inventory



**67:** This close view of the tail of Wulfe-Hound clearly shows the Medium Green blotches on the trailing edges in the distinctive unit-applied spidery style of the 303rd BG



**68:** This un-named B-17G-25-DL, 42-38017, went MIA after receiving combat damage during a mission to Berlin on 3 March 1944. In this view taken soon after Lt John Gossage and his crew of the 100th Bomb Group, 349th Bomb Squadron, forced landed at Schleswig, the base of NJG 3, the port outer engine nacelle can clearly be seen to be covered in oil. The later identity of XR-O with KG 200 is open to conjecture but may have been the mysterious 'A3+BB'



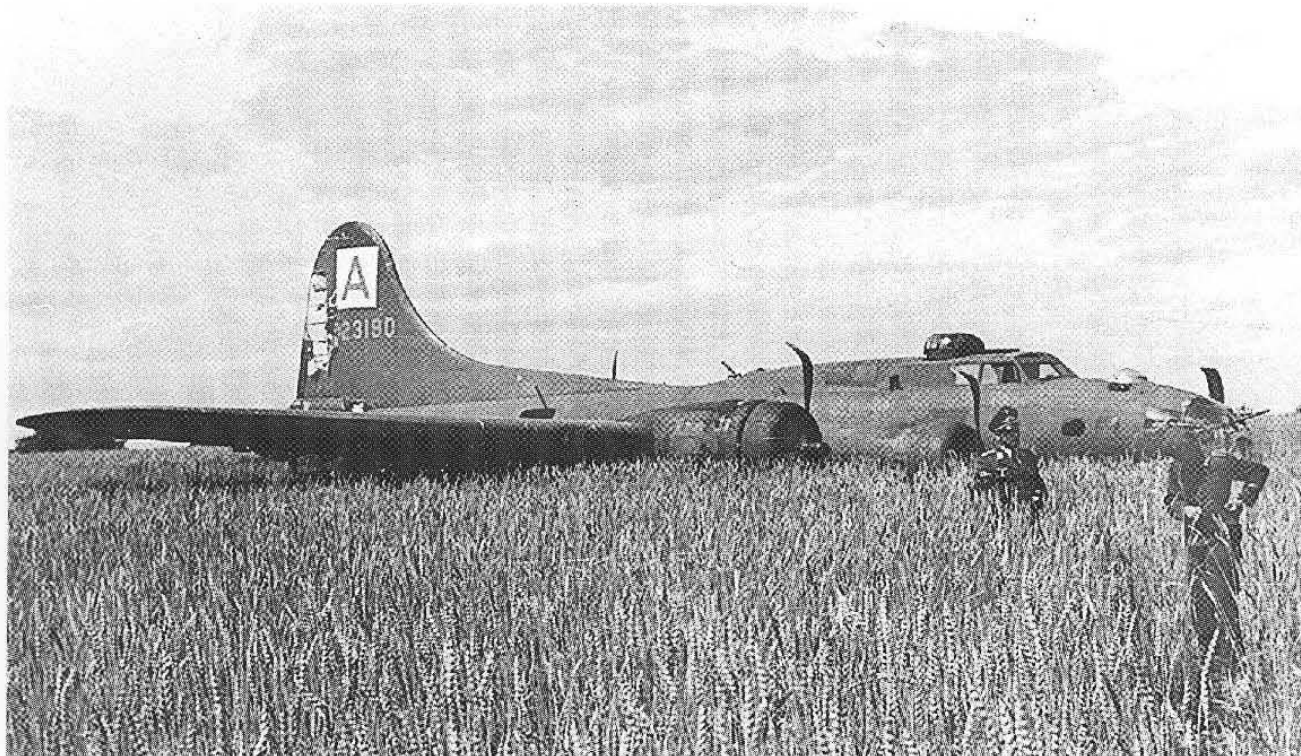
**69:** B-17F-85-BO 42-30048, Flak Dancer, of the 384th BG, 544th BS, came down with Lt Wheat and his crew near Laon, France, on 26 June 1943. It is seen here in Luftwaffe markings. It was allocated the Stammkennzeichen SJ+KY, but it is not known for certain whether it eventually went to KG 200. It almost certainly did as several unit codes carried by B-17s of that unit are known but which aircraft carried them is not



**70:** Flak Dancer after acquisition by the Luftwaffe, is typical in retaining most of its original US markings and finishes, except for the call sign SU-K







**70:** A view of B-17F 42-3190 of the 94th BG, 331st BS after being brought down in a French wheat field by Egon Mayer of JG 2 on 14 July 1943. It is clear that the propellers were still turning as the aircraft landed, but lateral control must have been almost non-existent after the rudder was so comprehensively shredded



**71:** This view of the tail unit of 42-3190 clearly shows the extensive damage to the control surfaces. While this obviously caused severe problems for the pilot, the damage was relatively easy to repair and the aircraft was soon in service with KG 200



**72:** B-17 42-3190 undergoing preliminary examination by Luftwaffe specialists. There appears to be an open parachute on the ground. The star on a disc national marking and yellow code letters carried at this early period of the war by US bombers in Europe are clearly visible





**73 Above:** An armed guard standing on the wreck of B-17F 42-3190 watches a Fieseler Storch demonstrating its ability to land almost anywhere. Note the open hatch which housed a dinghy

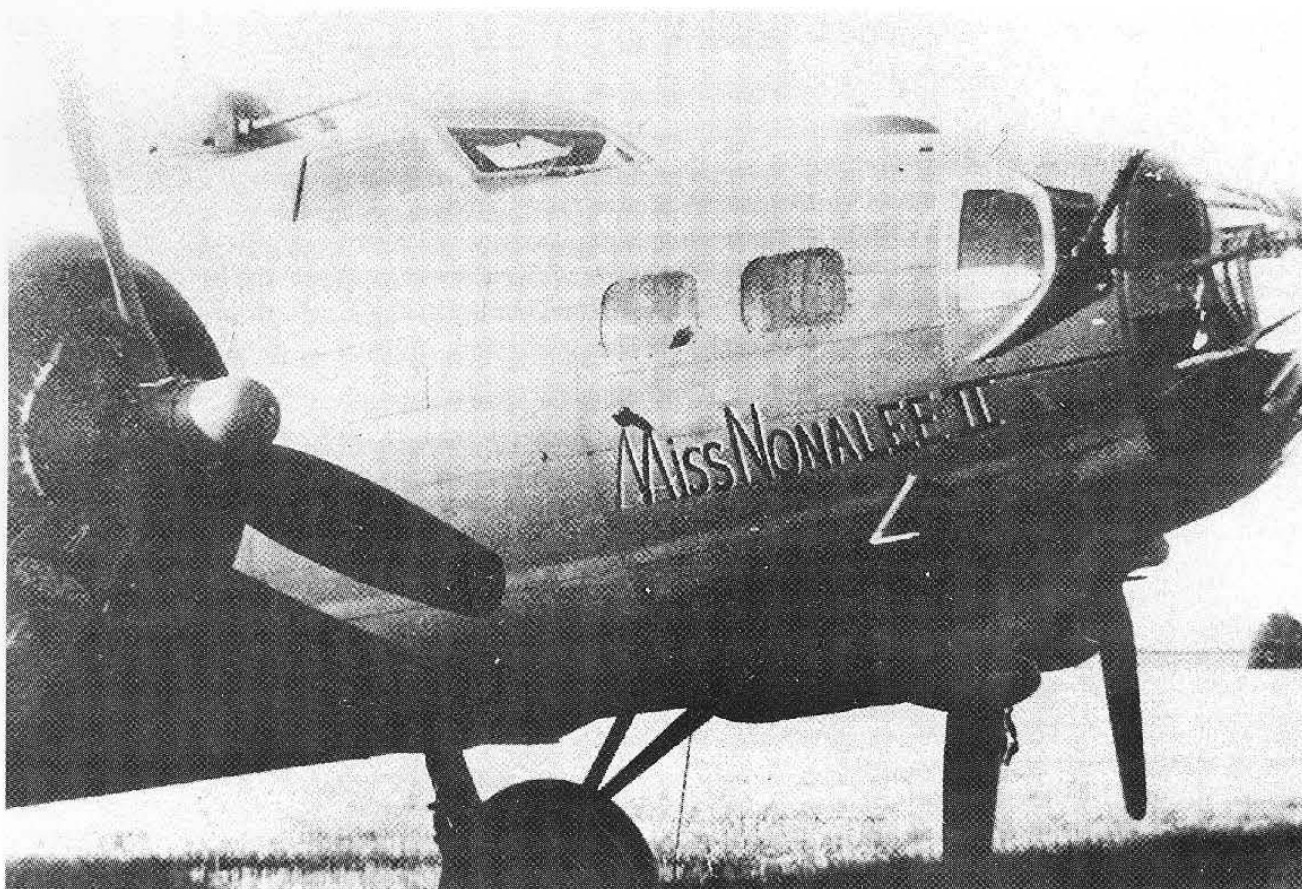
**74 Right:** More vehicles carrying technical staff and sightseers arrive near 42-3190. The photographer was there first but he failed to record the name Mr Five by Five allegedly carried by the aircraft



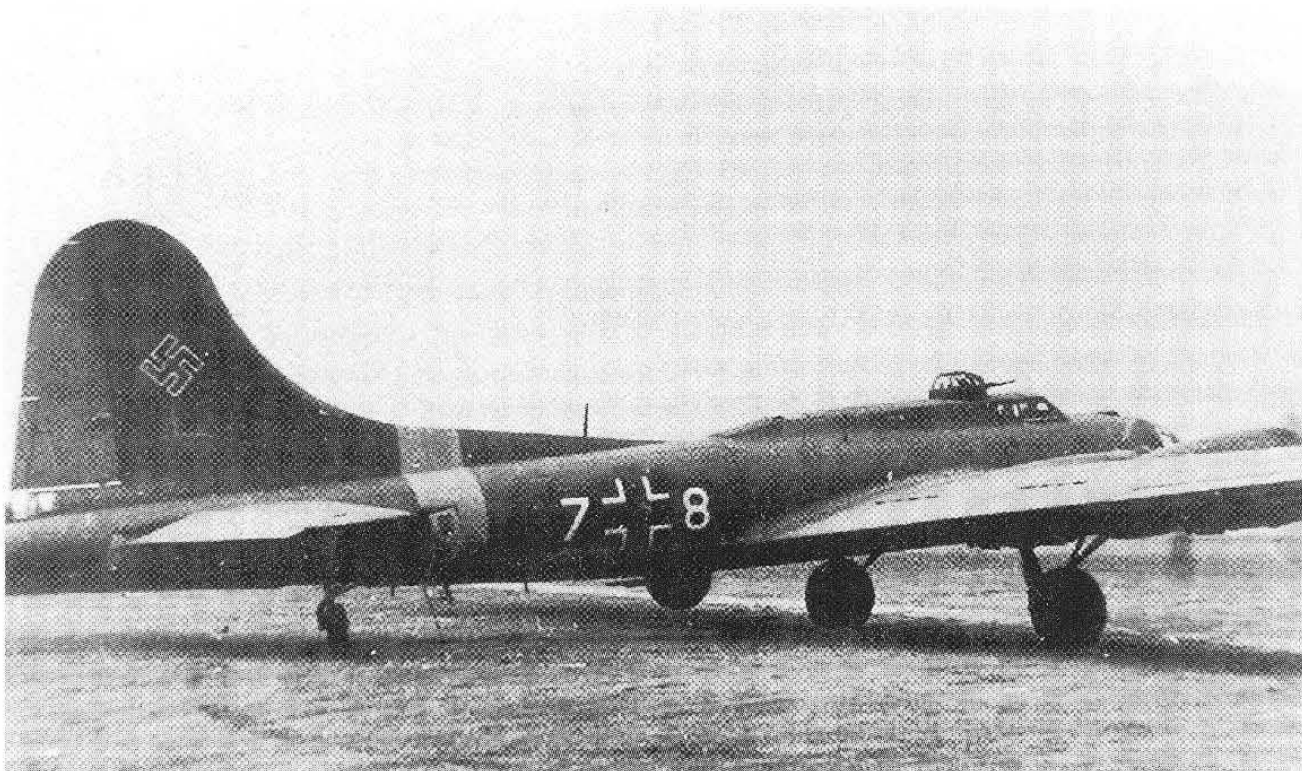
**75:** 9 October 1943 and B-17F-100-B0 42-30336, Miss Nonalee II, sits in a meadow at Varde, Denmark. Mechanical problems forced this 385th BG, 548th BS aircraft down during a mission to Anklam. The pilot, 1st Lt Glyndon Bell, evaded, the rest of the crew became POWs. Soon afterwards the aircraft was flown, on three engines, to Rechlin by Hans-Werner Lerche. There it received the captured aircraft code 7+8. Following numerous trials and affiliation visits to Luftwaffe units it was passed on to KG 200 on 28 August 1944. It was lost on 4 April 1945



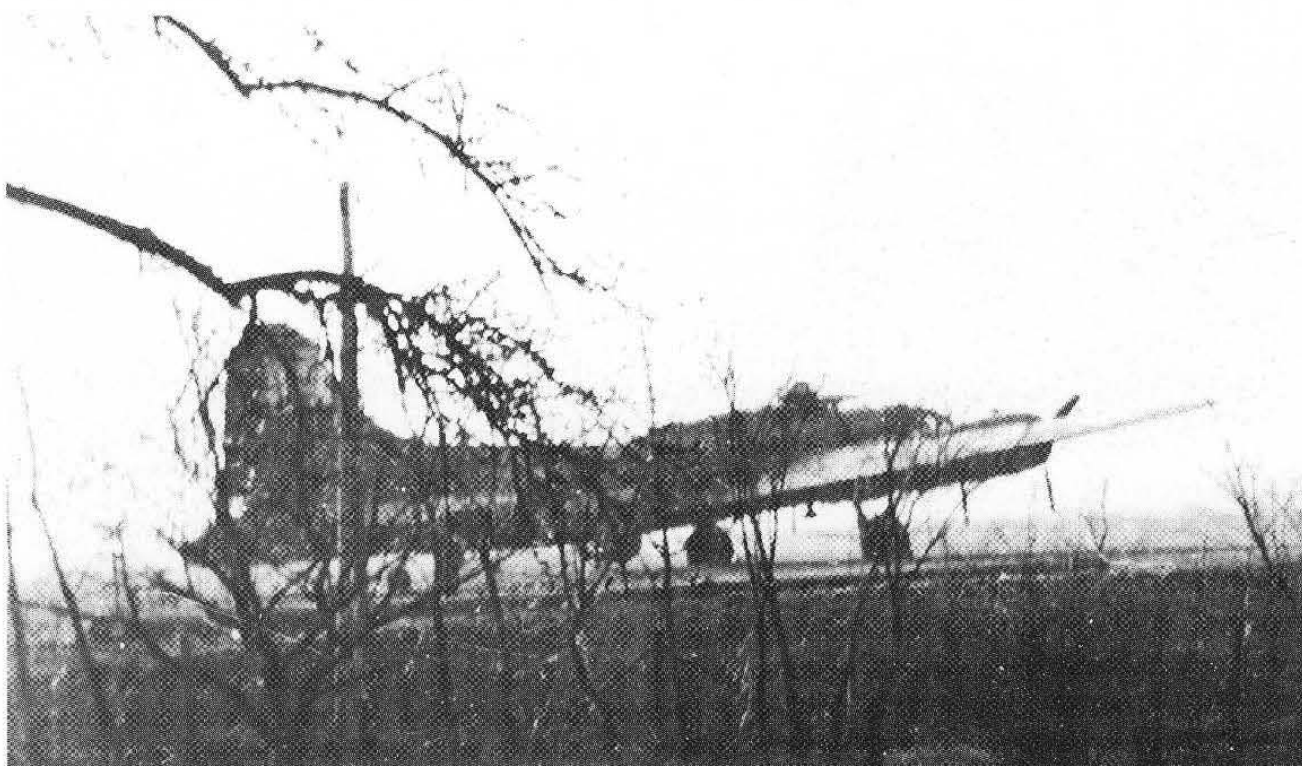




76: A close-up view of the name artwork on B-17F 42-30336 soon after it was captured in Denmark. Note the strengthened nose cone to resist blast damage from the newly-introduced 'cheek' guns



77: Miss Nonalee II after acquiring Luftwaffe insignia, the Rechlin test code 7+8 and a yellow fuselage band. Luftwaffe records indicate that she was eventually lost on 4 April 1945 in unknown circumstances while with I./KG 200. No KG 200 personnel losses are recorded then so the aircraft may have been destroyed on the ground or simply scrapped



78: This picture, taken secretly by a member of the Danish Resistance, shows B-17G-5-VE 42-39974 of the 452nd BG, 731st BS after it forced landed at Vaerlose on 9 April 1944. 2nd Lt Roener and his crew all became prisoners of war. It was later assigned to II./KG 200



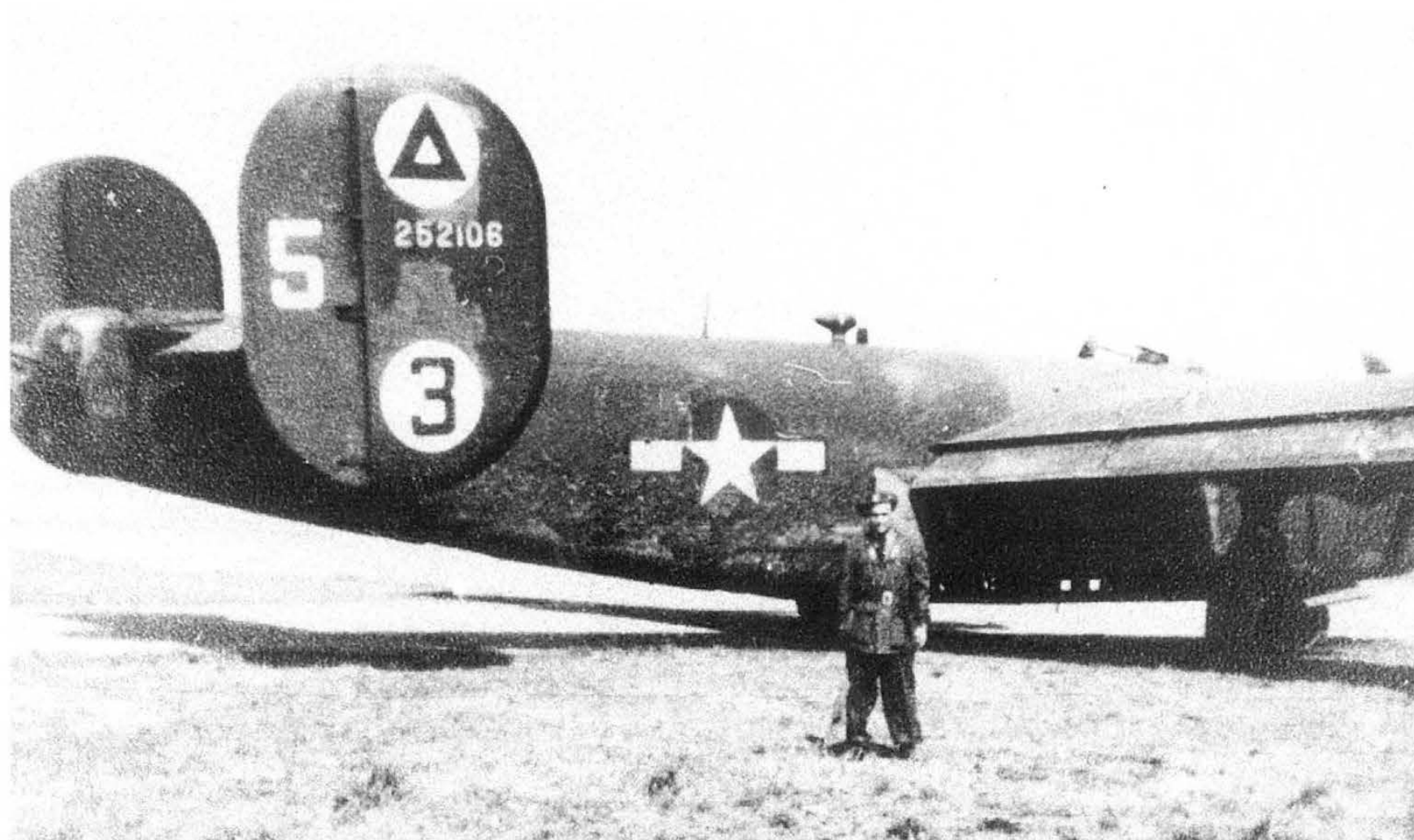
**79:** Lost on 30 December 1943, B-17G-1-VE 42-39759 Pickle Dropper of the 390th Bomb Group, 571st Bomb Squadron, was found abandoned in a wrecked French hangar at Chateaufort in September 1944, nine months later. The picture suggests that the aircraft was never returned to flying condition



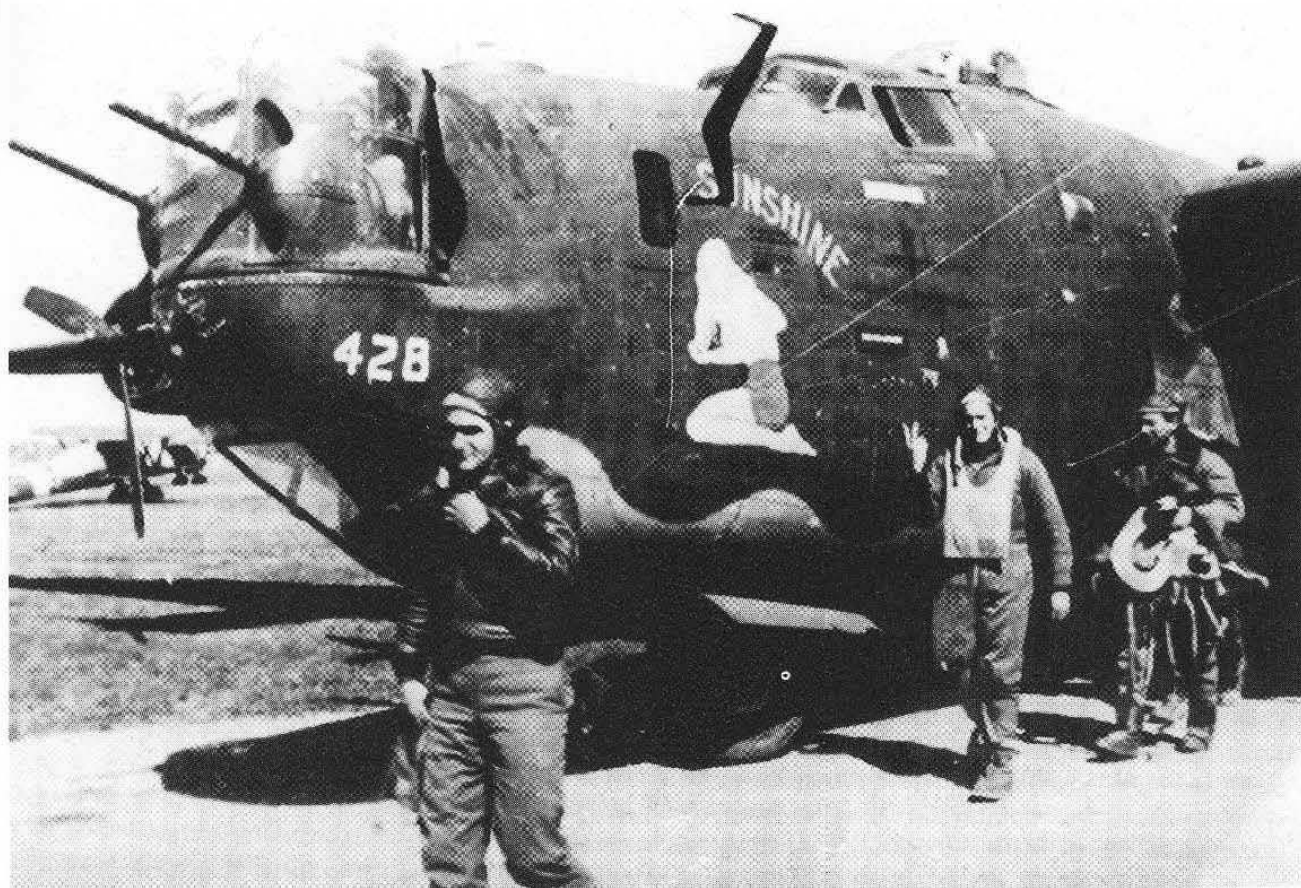
**80:** The first B-24 to be captured intact by the Axis forces was this desert-camouflaged B-24D-1-CO, 41-23659 of the 98th BG, 343rd BS, which landed in error in Sicily on 20 February 1943. Named Blonde Bomber II, after testing by the Italians, the aircraft was delivered to Rechlin in June. As far as is known it never entered service with KG 200



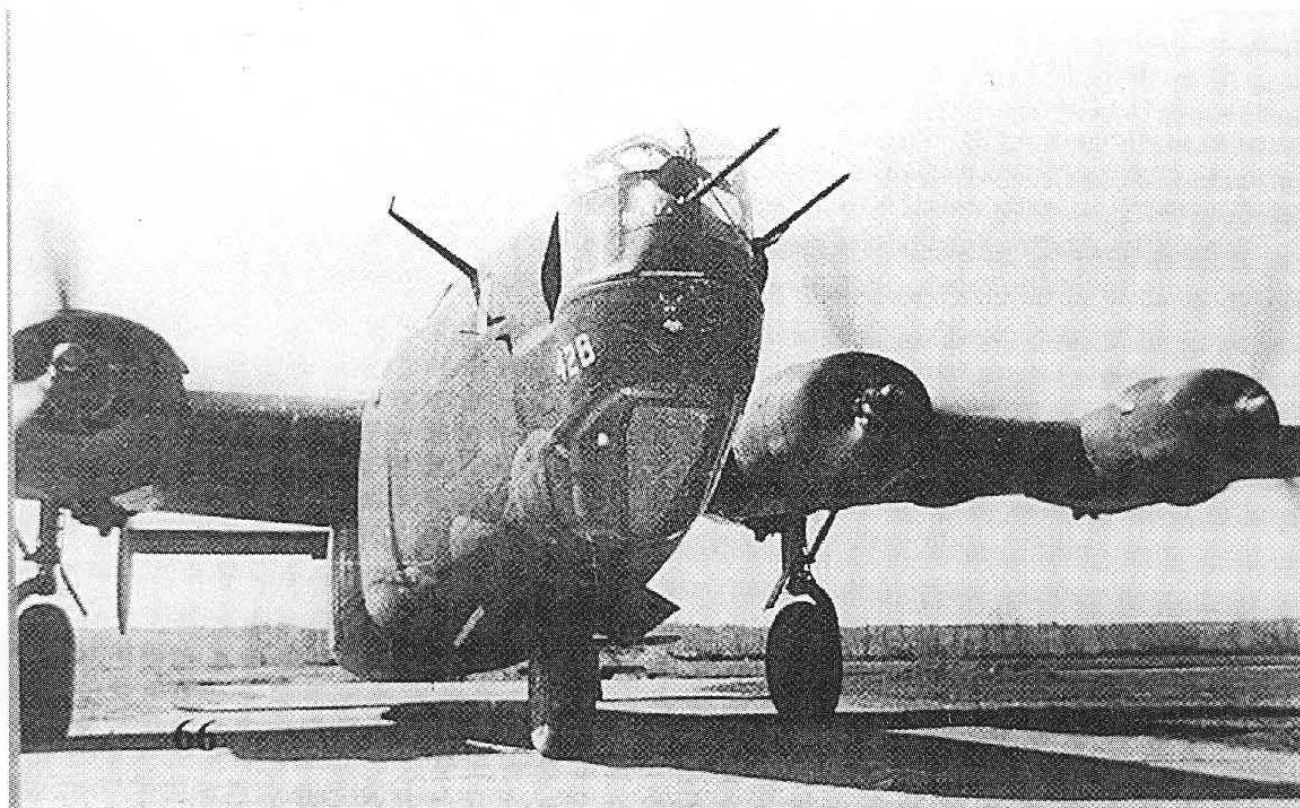
**81:** This picture serving as a backdrop for a member of the Italian RSI air force shows the tail markings of 42-52106 soon after its capture. As can be seen, the aircraft was already fairly war-weary



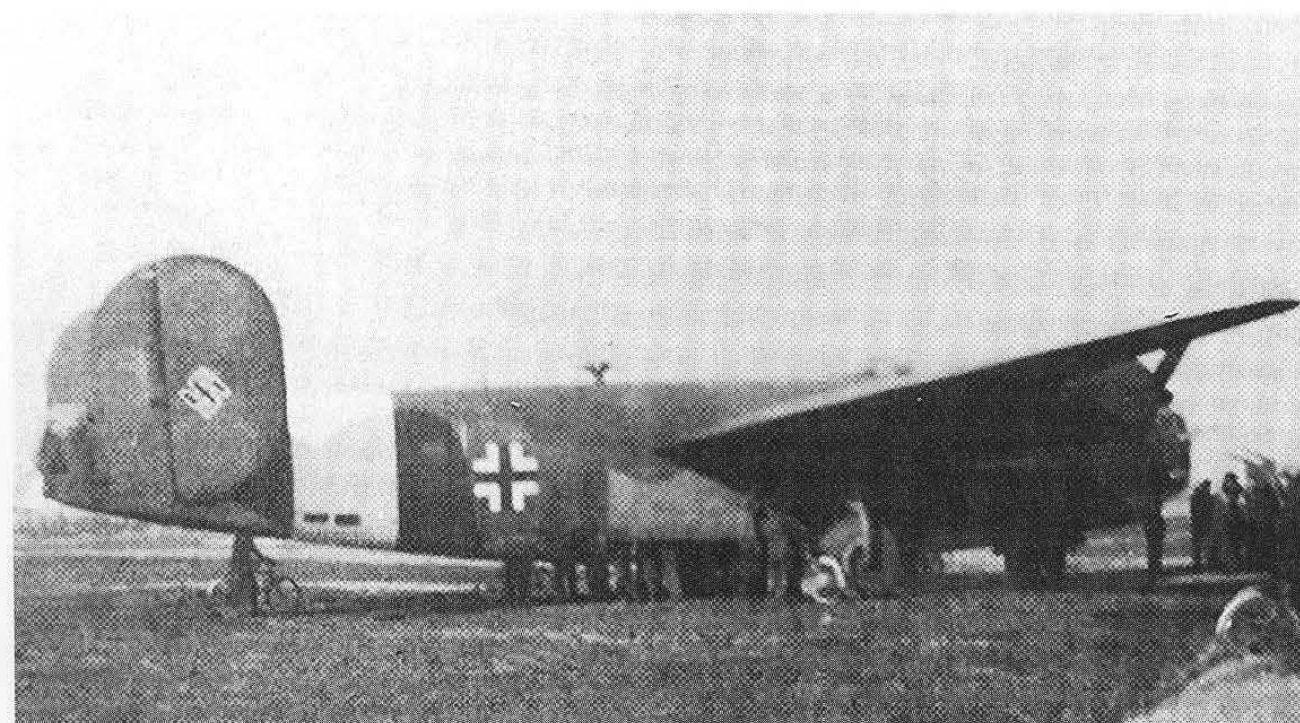




**82:** After losing two engines during a mission to Bolzano in Northern Italy on 29 March 1944, this B-24H-5-FO, 42-52106, Sunshine, of the 449th BG, 719th BS, force-landed at Venegono, just short of the Swiss border. After several days of interrogation, the crew were obliged to take part in a propaganda film showing them 'defecting'. Here nose gunner S/Sgt Orel Malcolm Harper gives the photographer the time-honoured salute. The crew were then sent to Stalag Luft I; the aircraft received two new engines and was flown to Germany for tests before being delivered to KG 200, possibly receiving the unit code A3+FK



**83:** Still wearing its unofficial American markings, Sunshine runs up its engines for the benefit of the Propaganda Kompanie photographer prior to departing for Rechlin. Just below the nose turret a horned devil's head wearing goggles and a flying helmet and breathing fire with the legend "Grrr-look out I'm poison" in capital letters can be made out

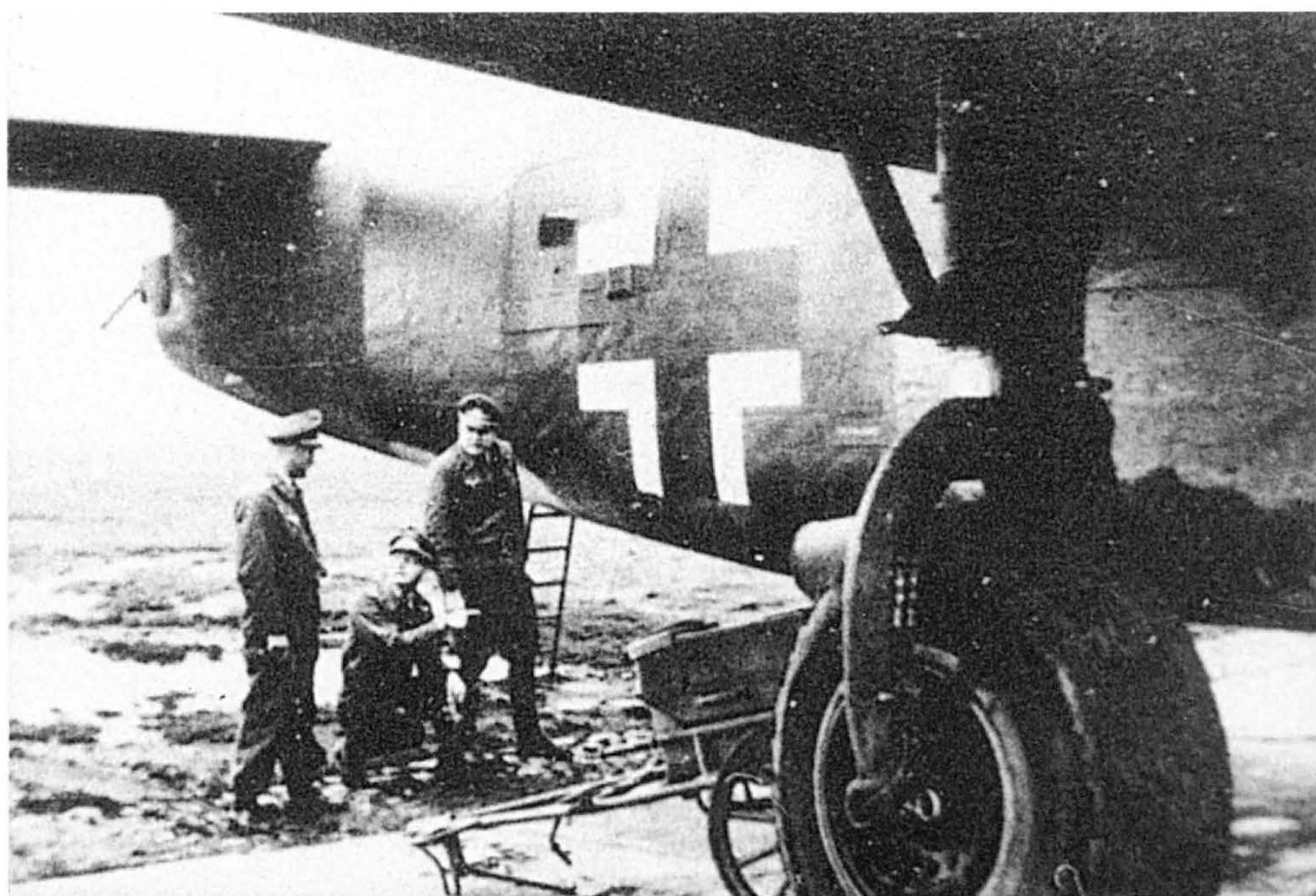


**84:** This picture of 42-52106 shows small size Luftwaffe insignia painted over the US stars and bars with a large white Mediterranean Theatre band ready for transit to Germany

**85 Top right:** Luftwaffe specialists inspect the American Meddo radar installed on Sunshine which the Germans intended to use to infiltrate and monitor RAF nocturnal bomber streams. The aircraft now sports oversized Luftwaffe insignia, although it retained the nose art and name



**86 Right centre:** B-24G-10-NT 42-78247 from the 461st BG, 765th BS fell into German hands when it lost two engines to flak on a mission to München on 4 October 1944. The aircraft was obliged to land at Landsberg-Penzing in Germany; the crew was captured. It was subsequently repaired and flown on tests in October-November. Here wearing yellow undersides and white panels with the Luftwaffe code CL+XZ, its eventual fate is uncertain. It is not thought to have gone to KG 200, although an unidentified B-24 with the KG 200 code A3+FK was logged at Wiener-Neustadt on 16 January 1945



**87 Below:** Seen at Hildesheim at the end of the war, this is the wreckage of B-24G-5-NT 42-78106 of the 460th BG of the US Fifteenth Air Force. It was lost on a raid against München on 9 June 1944. It was obviously repaired and entered service with the Luftwaffe with the Stammkennzeichen NF+NL. It is a candidate for the unidentified B-24 of KG 200 recorded in Franz Kraemer's logbook as A3+FK, then at Wiener-Neustadt on 16 January 1945. Unfortunately, no codes are visible on the wreck which would confirm this either way

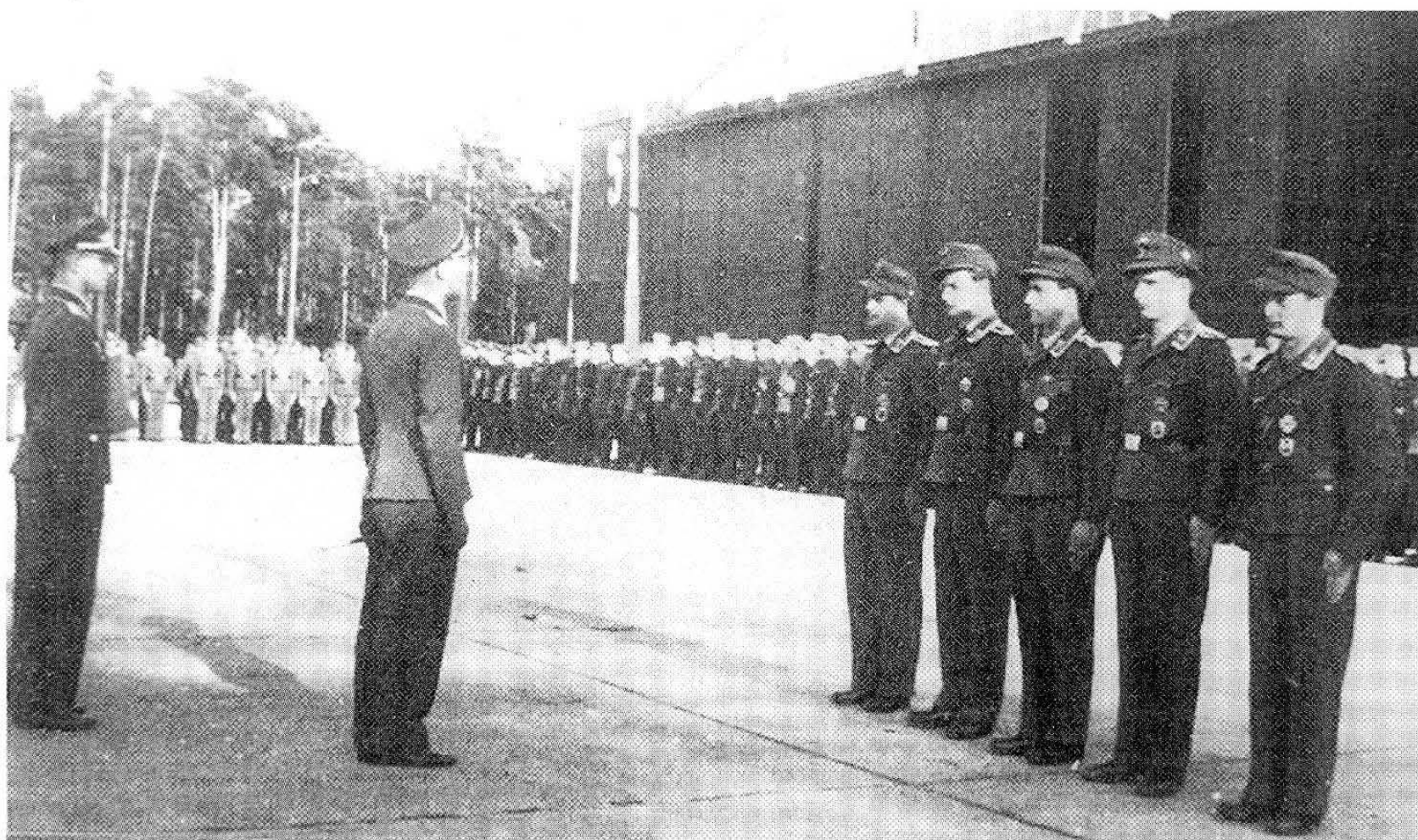




## B-17 and B-24 aircraft known to have been used by KG 200

Type	US Serial	US Code	MIA	Initial Code	KG 200 code	Notes
B-17F-27-BO	41-24585	PU-B	12/12/42	DL+XC	?	<i>Wulfe Hound</i> , 303BG/360BS. To KG 200 3/44
B-17F-35-DL	42-3190	QE-W	14/7/43		A3+BB?	<i>Mr Five by Five</i> , 94BG/331BS
B-17F-90-BO	42-30146	TS-A	29/7/43		A3+CE	<i>Down &amp; Go</i> , 94BG/333BS Braun lgbk 18.6.44 Finsterwalde Sieber lgbk 26.8.44 Finsterwalde Blew up on takeoff 10/2/45
B-17F-100-BO	42-30336	GX-E	9/10/43	7+8	?	<i>Miss Nonalee II</i> , 385BG/548BS. To KG 200 28/8/44. Lost 4/4/45
B-17F-25-DL	42-3097	XA-?	30/12/43		A3+BB	<i>The Ground Hog</i> , 385BG/549BS, according to IWM German docs
B-17G-10-VE	42-39969	IW-K	11/1/44		?	401BG/614BS. Recovered 1948. Not confirmed but only a/c which fits with that lost at Valencia on 27/5/44
B-17G-25-DL	42-38017	XR-O	3/3/44		A3+FB	100BG/349BS. To KG 200 5/44. Confirmed by radio traffic in eastern Mediterranean 5/44. Braun lgbk.
B-17F-115-BO	42-30713	BI-E	6/3/44		A3+EK	<i>Phyllis Marie</i> , 390BG/568BS. Recovered 5/45
B-17G-5-VE	42-39974	7D-?	9/4/44		?	452BG/731BS
B-17G?	42-38017?				A3+BB	Sachtleben/Von Pechmann lgbks. Finsterwalde 8 — 17/1/45. Shot down 3/3/45 by nightfighter.
B-17	?				A3+IB	In East 1944. POW said at Finow 2/45
	?				A3+JB	19/3/45. Operation KARNEVAL
	?				A3+AE	Braun lgbk. 18/5/44 Finsterwalde
	?				A3+GE	Braun lgbk. 18/5/44 Rechlin
B-17G	?				A3+EE	Braun lgbk. 8/5/44 Finsterwalde
	?				A3+AG	Kraemer lgbk. 2/1/45 Wiener Neustadt
Other B-17s possibly allocated to KG200:						
B-17F-85-BO	42-30048	SU-K	26/6/43	SJ+KY	?	<i>Flak Dancer</i> , 384BG/544BS
B-17F-110-BO	42-30604	LN-T	4/10/43			<i>Badger Beauty V</i> , 100BG/350BS. Probably not flown. Recovered 8/44
B-17F-5-VE	42-5714	LL-S	14/10/43.	DR+PE	?	<i>Old Faithful</i> , 91BG/323BS
B-17F-20-DL	42-3060	LL-G	1/12/43			<i>Hell's Belle</i> , 91BG/401BS. For spares
B-17G-1-VE	42-39759	FC-C	30/12/43			<i>Pickle Dropper/Sarah Jane</i> , 390BG/571BS. Not flown
B-17G-15-DL	43-37827	JJ-?	5/12/44		?	<i>Wally's Wheels</i> , 305BG/422BS. Found wrecked at Weimar/Kolleda 5/45
B-17G-85-BO	43-38432	DS-P	5/12/44			351BG/511BS. Used for spares
B-17G-90-BO	43-38648	H8-H	20/2/45			468BG/835BS. Senthofen. "10% damaged 25/2/45". Probably never used
As apparently no more than 20 B-17s of all models were captured, most of those flown being Fs, it seems likely that codes were changed or duplicated and sub-types mis-identified. As far as is known, no more than four or five G models may have actually been flown by KG 200. Orders of Battle list a maximum of eight B-17s on strength at any one time. Crew logbooks which identify aircraft as Gs may have done so erroneously. Most just note 'B-17'.						
B-24H-5-DT	41-28641	E3-?	4/2/44		A3+KB	453BG/732BS. Recovered 5/45
B-24H-5-FO	42-52106	5	29/3/44		A3+??	<i>Sunshine</i> , 499BG/719BS. A3+FK?
B-24G-5-NT	42-78106		9/6/44	NF+NL	A3+??	460BG/76xBS. A3+FK?
B-24H-15-DT	41-28779		20/6/44	KO+XA	KO+XA	389BG/564BS. Burnt by crew 4/45
B-24	?				A3+FK	Kraemer lgbk. 16/1/45 Wiener Neustadt
B-24H-15-FO	42-52627	H6-?	12/7/44		Not used	453BG/735BS. Destroyed by strafing
B-24J-195-CO	44-41108		24/3/45		?	Freiburg doc RL 2 III/695. 'To KG 200'





## 1944

# A NEW GESCHWADER

### The birth of KG 200

On 19 February 1944 the Versuchsverband der Ob.d.L. was declared disbanded with effect from 21 February. On that date a re-formed Versuchsstelle für Höhenflüge and another formation, to be organised and commanded by *Oberst* Heigl, was set up. The new Versuchsverband OKL based at Oranienburg included personnel and materiel of the previous unit and remained under the command of *Oberstlt* Rowehl. He was transferred to a post at the RLM in April and *Maj* Adolf Koch took his place.

A 1.Staffel, the Einsatz (operational) Staffel with 19 aircraft was commanded by *Oblt* Horst Götz and was assigned the photographic reconnaissance role. Its aircraft included Ju 86, Ju 88, Ju 188 and the Arado Ar 240s that had been on charge with the earlier Versuchsverband. This experimental type was intended as a *Zerstörer* (heavy fighter) but was adaptable to other duties. The reconnaissance versions were capable of 620 kph but had handling problems at altitude. Markings of the Ar 240s were recorded as T5+MH, T5+YP and, later, T9+GL.

A 2.Staffel, Versuchsstaffel für Feindflugzeuge (enemy aircraft), unofficially the 'Beute' (prize) Staffel, was under the command of *Hptm* Theodor Rosarius from July

1944 until May 1945 and still known as the Zirkus Rosarius, continuing to experiment with and to demonstrate captured Allied fighters (and PR) aircraft, supervised by *Hptm* (Ing) Trebs. A small detachment remained at Orly-Villeneuve-le-Roi.

The 3.Staffel, an Ausbildungs-und-Ergänzungsstaffel, under *Oblt* Heinrich Schoene, was a 'reserve' unit, maintaining aircraft and occasionally undertaking operational trials.

At this stage very little was changed — but the old Stab/Ob.d.L. became the Stab of *Oberst* Heigl's new 'Kampfgeschwader 200' which was henceforth to be responsible for all 'special operations' on behalf of the Intelligence agencies. This 'Geheim (secret) Geschwader' was formed on 21 February and composed of two Gruppen and the Stab at Wildpark-Werder near Potsdam, adjacent to 'Kurfürst', the OKL rear echelon whose operations staff was directly attached to the Führer's headquarters under the name 'Robinson'. The staff officer responsible for the allocation of tasks to the Geschwader was *Maj iG* Kurt Randel-Semper.

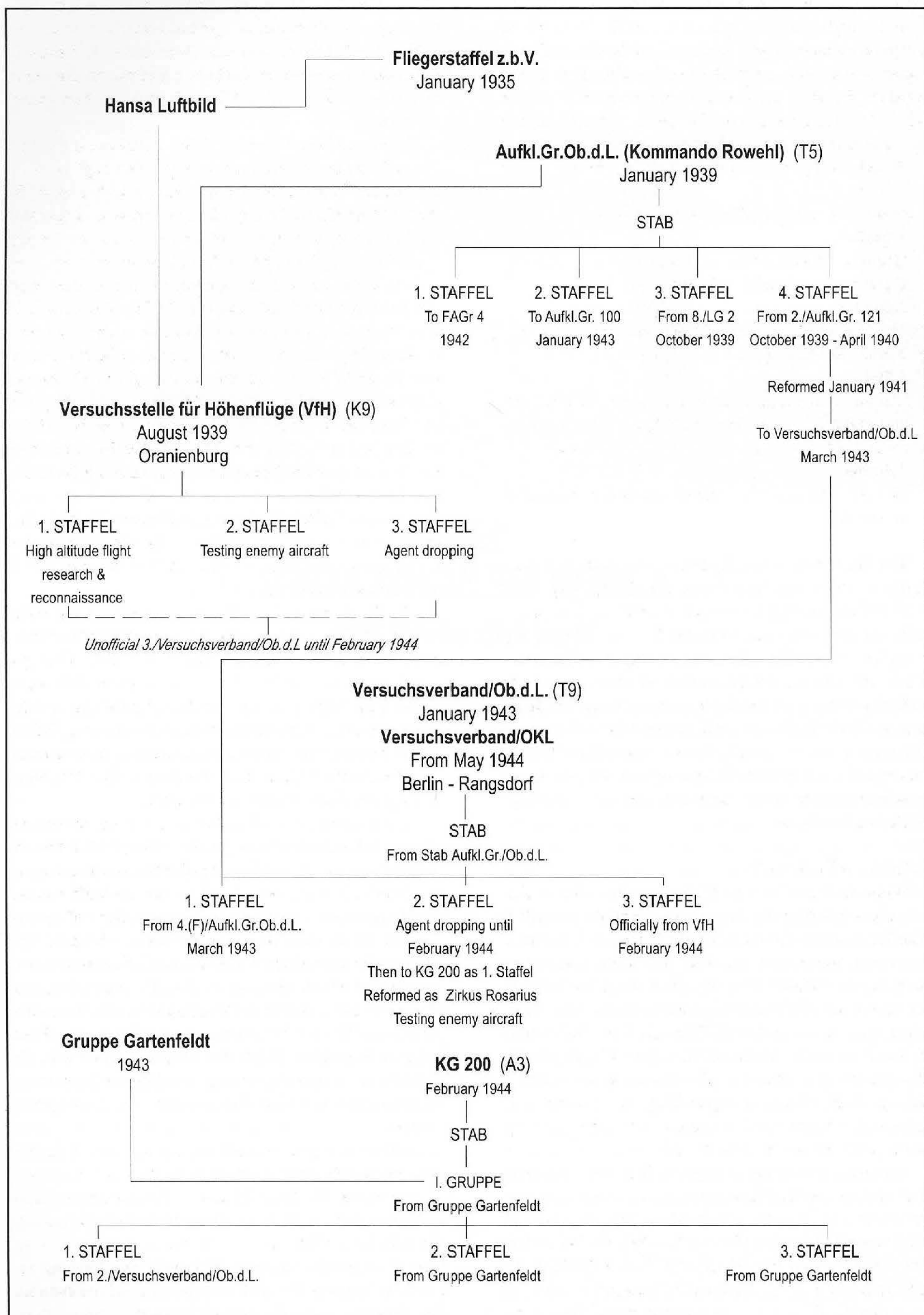
For some time the OKL was undecided about the establishment of the Geschwader but an outline for the I./KG 200 was:

- 1.Staffel: long-range operations (over 250 km)
- 2.Staffel: short-range operations (under 250 km)
- 3.Staffel: training and replacement

**88 Above:** Major Adolf Koch, Kommandeur of I./KG 200, presides over a ceremony on 14 April 1944 to award the German Cross in Gold to Lt Thurnhuber and his crew. The secrecy surrounding KG 200 was such that few records survive concerning awards to members of the unit



# ORGANISATION TIME LINE





Only the 1./KG 200 was activated, its Kommandos being simply those set up by the Versuchsverband to act for the Intelligence offices of the Abwehr and the RSHA.

A 1. Flughafenbetriebs Kompanie/KG 200 provided independent maintenance and repair of the Gruppe's machines at the outstations. Most of the aircraft of the 2. Staffel at that time were He 111s, although on formation the 1. Staffel had on charge 33 assorted aircraft, a legacy from the earlier unit, including three captured B-17s.

The II. Gruppe was soon organised in a different way:

**Stab:** Kommandeur, *Maj* Hans Jungwirth

**1. Staffel:**

'Transportkolonne XI-Ost', *Maj* Jungwirth and 'Koch-Gerät'; *Oblt* Friedrich Schäfer.

**2. Staffel:**

The 'Leonidas Staffel' of SO men; awaiting glide-bomb; *Oblt* H. Lange.

**3. Staffel:**

'Kommandotruppen'; Fallschirmjäger; without aircraft; *Oblt* Kempke. Friedrich Schäfer from June-October 1944.

**4. Staffel:**

The Ausbildungskompanie of the earlier Versuchsverband.

The Geschwader Headquarters was soon moved to Berlin-Finsterwalde. Thus, for the time being, only the 1. Staffel of the I. Gruppe was operationally activated; the principal (cover-named) Kommandos were directly responsible to the 1./KG 200, each having a small number of aircraft. A number of temporary outstations were periodically set up as re-fuelling depots across Europe, from Chartres in the north-west to Simferopol in the far south-east, from Stavanger-Sola in Norway to Istres-le-Tube on the edge of the Camargue in southern France, but these detachments were not, so far as has been discovered, allocated cover-names.

## Kommando Carmen

While the small staff of Kommando Toska under Dümcke was organising the establishment of a radio link from Traviata to Athens and Berlin, Kommando Carmen at Bergamo was by no means idle. With a very small complement of Ju 88 aircraft — Ju 188s were delivered only one at a time and the records are confused about them, giving their codes as A3+TB and A3+WB which could not have applied until mid-1944, as was A3+NB of a Ju 88 — its missions consisted almost exclusively of dropping agents over Allied-occupied Italy, North Africa and, later, southern France at the rate of one mission every two days during the summer of 1944.

In May, *Lt* Joseph Thornhuber with his crew, Andreas Stark, despatcher; Karl Dusterberg, radio-operator; Georg Kellermann, observer and Hans Sievers, flight-engineer, were urgently transferred from Kommando Maria, for which they had flown more than 50 agent 'insertions', to Italy. There came a break from duty when on 14 April, at Finsterwalde, they each were awarded the Deutsches

Kreuz in Gold, in recognition for the dangerous missions completed in the East. As early as August 1943 Thornhuber had joined the 1./Ob.d.L. at Rangsdorf, then transferred to Kommando Maria at Minsk where he was to fly a He 111 fitted with extra fuel tanks. The aircraft under-surfaces were finished black exclusively for night operations and no national insignia were marked on the aircraft.

From Lemberg the crew flew several agents to the Trans-Siberian railway, each man carrying explosives to destroy key parts of the railway line. Another agent in the uniform of a Red Army officer was dropped near the Urals, carrying a large sum of money — his task to pay agents working for the Abwehr in that distant area.

The most hazardous operation in the East was JOSEPH, mounted early in 1944. *Lt* Thornhuber was to supply an agent working near Moscow with provisions, the dropping zone north-east of the city to be marked by four flares. When Thornhuber lost height to throw out the materiel, his Heinkel was suddenly caught in the glare of several searchlights; the Soviets were clearly waiting for him and only by some risky, low-level manoeuvres was he able to avoid becoming the target of anti-aircraft fire. Such missions as these showed the crew was very experienced before its posting to Kommando Carmen, where it was urgently needed. The strength of the Kommando at Bergamo was normally no more than two or three aircraft at any one time.

On 13 August *Oblt* Dümcke, previously with Kommando Toska, became Kommandoführer of Carmen, taking the place of the commander, *Lt* Klingohr. The high loss-rates experienced by Luftwaffe units in Italy were almost certainly due to the excellent British Air Intelligence. German radio operators in Merano could, during operations by their own aircraft, listen in to conversations between the RAF controllers and their pilots, plotting the positions of Luftwaffe aircraft.

In the spring of 1944, shortly after his arrival at Bergamo, Thornhuber was given the unexpected task of providing money and gold to an Abwehr agent serving at the British Headquarters. The *Leutnant* took off in good time to reach the dropping area at dawn; this was a part-derelict tower near the town of Lecce which he approached by flying in low from the Adriatic and the crew threw out the load with engines throttled back. As usual the flyers knew nothing of the agent's identity but many years later Thornhuber learned that this spy remained until the last days of the war in regular contact with his Control, sending on important intelligence. This 'long-term investment' by the Abwehr was obviously a great success.

Allied intelligence maintained a close watch on its operations which, on the whole, were successful, but on 19 September *Oblt* Dümcke and *Uffz* Romke were killed and *Ofw* Gladik seriously injured when their Ju 188D-2, A3+RD, hit a high-tension line and crashed two miles west of Bergamo. Late in October, Ju 188 A3+MD arrived via Vicenza. On 28 November, one of the Junkers flew down the Adriatic coast and turned inland south of



Senigallia, returning via Florence to Bergamo, carrying out its mission (no details were given) at 19.11 hours from some 1,524 m. After this, the detachment's operations were restricted; the December allocation of aviation fuel was 61 cbm, enough for ten to fifteen sorties. On 29 December, however, a Ju 188 flew over Genoa and Civitavecchia in the early hours for a five-hour flight to Naples and Milazzo in Sicily.

In November, *Hptm* Joseph Thornhuber was appointed to succeed *Lt* Dümcke. In the New Year 'moon period' the Allied intelligence and radar operation noted 13 sabotage agents dropped in Italy. Of these, an ex-officer of a disbanded regiment of Alpini (Italian mountain troops) was arrested in Rome on 8 January. He admitted that he had been recruited by the SD (and given the cover-name 'Colosseo') and taken to Bologna late in 1944 with a group intended to be a 'stay-behind' unit, teamed with a radio-operator. In the second week of December they were taken to Carmen's operational headquarters in Bergamo, then to Verona to await the moon-phase. On 31 December, they returned to Bergamo, kitted out for a parachute drop and introduced to the five-man crew of a Ju 88. The flight took them over the Adriatic, then across the coast south of Ancona to the dropping area 32 km from Rome, near Braccano.

On the night of 16/17 February an operation by six aircraft was staged though Aniarco and Udine for flights down the east coast. One of these Carmen aircraft flew along the Po Valley, south-west of Pola, and back. A further operation took place on 28 February/1 March, beginning a burst of activity for the RSHA. Missions were recorded on 2/3, 5/6, 6/7 and 7/8 March; from these and a drop on 22 March, the agents were tracked down and arrested. One caught in Rome admitted to being one of the party of four dropped by PAG; he spoke of a supposedly reassuring intercom link with the crew compartment.

Another mission almost ended in tragedy for Thornhuber's crew; a multi-lingual agent of Egyptian origin was to be dropped by Lake Bolsena, north of Rome. As the Heinkel approached the dropping area at minimum speed, the despatcher shouted: "He doesn't want to get out!" and the command: "Throw him out!" came too late. Thornhuber opened the throttles, crossed the lake but had three Mosquitos in close pursuit which, however, failed to hit their target. Above Elba, Thornhuber managed to evade his enemies and returned with the Abwehr agent still on board. On 12 March 1945, at Bergamo, *Lt* Thornhuber received the Ritterkreuz from *Oberstlt* Linsingen bravely in all his sorties — the only member of KG 200 ever to receive this highly-prized decoration.

Allied radar kept an efficient watch on the activities of Kommando Carmen. On 21 March a Ju 188D-2 of the 4./KG 200 went missing, the fate of the pilot, *Hptm* Heinz Domack, and his crew unknown. However, 'two Ju 188s from Bergamo' were picked up by Mediterranean Allied Air Forces (MAAF) 'Sigint'. One landed at Udino but the other was tracked after crossing the coast near Ancona by Flg Off Scollan and Flt Sgt Blundell in a Mosquito of 256 Sqn:

*"The hostile re-crossed the coast heading northeast near Pola/Trieste and after making visual confirmation the Mosquito opened fire, setting both engines ablaze and it was seen to be a Ju 188. It fell into the sea about three miles offshore".*

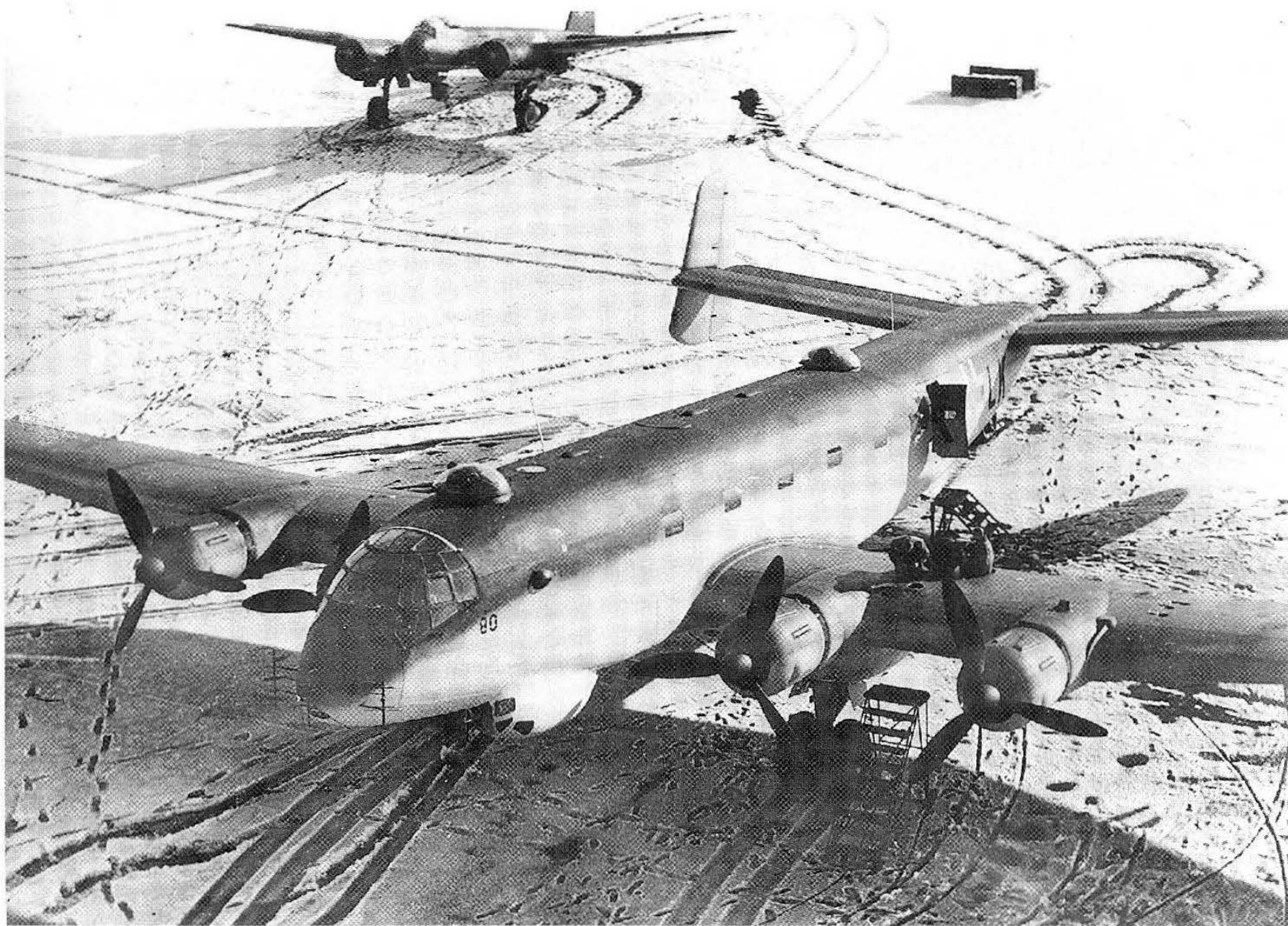
In April Carmen was allocated only 17 cbm of fuel — enough for five sorties — and made use of only one Junkers. This was virtually the end of operations by the Kommando and its small staff and the RSHA office prepared for a move to Parma.

On 24 April, P-47s of the US 346th Fighter Squadron attacked Bergamo twice, claiming a greatly exaggerated number of nine Ju 188s destroyed. Thornhuber recorded:

*"In mid-April 1945 the whole crew stood on top of their quarters and watched an attack on the airfield by American fighters, during which their Ju 188 was shot up. One of the bombs that had been loaded on the aeroplane for an intended attack on a bridge exploded and tore the machine apart."*

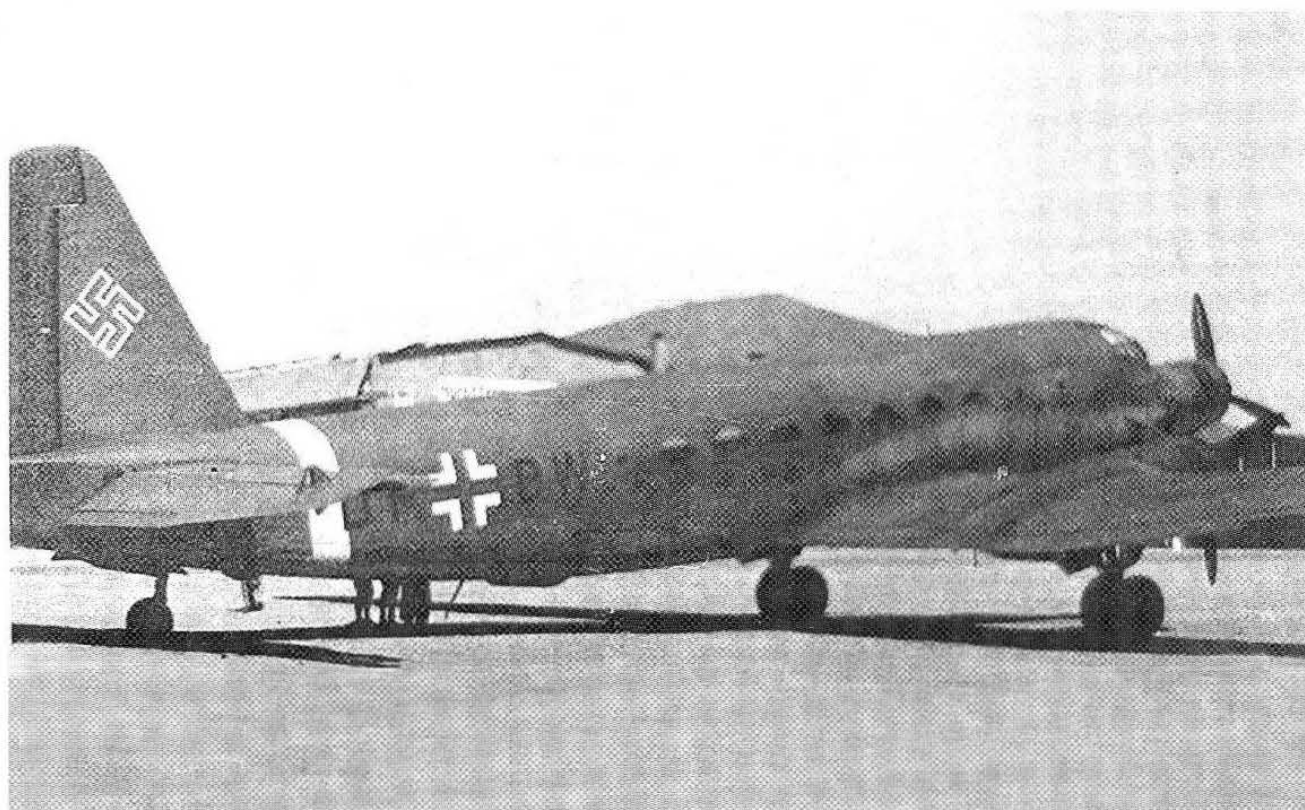
Having no aircraft, the personnel of Carmen set off overland to Germany by way of the South Tyrol.





**89 Above:** The Ju 290 series bore much of the workload of KG 200. This is Ju 290A-5 W.Nr. 0180, KR+LK, outside the Junkers works at Dessau on 23 March 1944. Later sent to I./FAGr. 5 as 9V+KH it is typical of aircraft of the type which were subordinated to KG 200. This particular aircraft was destroyed on the ground during an air raid on 10 April 1945 on Rechlin

**90:** A potentially valuable asset for KG 200's long-range operations was the Junkers Ju 252. This is the VII, the seventh production Ju 252A-1, DT+BW, at Athens/Tatoi in August 1943. Some operations by the Gruppe Gartenfeldt were carried out by such aircraft







## THE LEONIDAS STAFFEL

### Enter Hanna Reitsch

Always in the forefront of argument for the *Totaleinsatz* project were Otto Skorzeny, Karl-Heinz Lange and Hanna Reitsch. Skorzeny and Lange were very different, one tall and heavily built, the other small, trim and obsessive; but both were thorough tactical and logistical planners. Reitsch, on the other hand, concentrated on technical problems and, these having been solved, on the practical means of achieving early success.

Skorzeny and Lange were but two of the relatively small number of operational planners who gave thought to support for proposed operations, rather than to any 'glory' that success might bring. For planners on both German and Allied sides, success was elusive when logistics and contingency planning in the event of failure of those actions were not fully considered. Examples of this were Mounbatten's determination to carry out a landing at Dieppe, although the operation could have had no decisive military result; 'MARKET GARDEN' the air-borne landings in Holland, and the decision by HQ SHAEF to call out the Resistance in France immediately after the landings in Normandy. The hidebound Oberkommando der Wehrmacht made numerous smaller mistakes; in particular those involving German pockets on the Eastern Front.

On the other hand, General Orde Wingate's Staff in India fully worked out details and logistics for Operation 'THURSDAY', the 'Chindit' landings in Burma, as did HQ Bengal Command for the defence of Imphal in Assam. Both these operations depended, of course, on air reinforcement and supply.

In fact, it seems that Lange viewed the situation realistically, intending that glide-bombs should be used simultaneously in attacks on all major British warships when they had moved south to provide heavy gunfire support and anti-aircraft defences for the inevitable Allied landings on the northern coast of Hitler's so-called *Festung Europa* — 'Fortress Europe'. Such a devastating attack, incurring the self-sacrifice of a relatively small number of Lange's troops, would leave the landing ships, landing craft and accompanying Allied freighters widely open to surface or submarine attack by the Kriegsmarine and offer the German Army opportunities to regain control of any beaches or villages occupied by the first waves of invading Allied troops. By throwing back an invasion force and destroying its naval support, it might be possible to so damage Allied, particularly British, morale that some armistice or similar agreement might be reached. Had Lange's plan been feasible, the result may have been favourable to the Germans and achieved some respite.

Late in 1943 a loose group of some 30 to 40 young men, led by *Oblt* Lange, was gathered together. Most were former or active glider-pilots, some of whom had never flown a powered aircraft. Hanna Reitsch was invited to

**91 Above:** When *Oblt* Lange sought backing from Goebbels, he and a party of his *SO*-men were invited to the Propaganda Ministry on 18 July 1944. The *SO*-men, seen here with Lange on the left, were feted by Artur Axmann, the Hitler Youth leader. Goebbels' hopes for an immediate air strike were clearly not feasible, however, and he lost interest



attend their meetings, until they felt the idea sufficiently developed to present to the OKL or other authorities so that construction of a suitable aircraft could begin. They made it clear that the authorities should not misunderstand their 'complete dedication' and purpose and they wanted technical assistance to make the project possible. This to be done as quickly as possible because of the desperate military situation and controlled by a leader who would ensure that their weapon would be used only in the spirit of total commitment for which it was intended. In October they set up a committee headed by *Oblt* Lange, *Medizinalrat* Doctor Theo Benzinger, heading the Institute for Medical Aeronautics at Rechlin and, of course, *Flugkapitän* Hanna Reitsch.

On receiving the reserved approval of the OKL to his 'Totalinsatz' plan, Lange lost no time in asking for various aircraft to begin training in glider-towing and practice bombing. For the present he was allowed only gliders for, it seems, Hanna Reitsch advised that basic training, no matter what the previous experience of the SO men, should be on *Habicht* sailplanes, then on the short-span *Stummelhacht* sailplanes that could achieve high speed, some 300 km/h, in a simulated glide-bomb attack.

On 4 February, Lange was called to Berlin-Gatow where *Oberst* Heigl, uncertain as to the competence of his new command, asked the *Oberleutnant* to consider what proposals for operations could be made practical in two weeks time. Heigl clearly admired Lange's imagination and dedication to his work, both sadly lacking at OKL, and discouraged by the uninspiring leadership of Göring who showed no interest in projects with which he could not be closely associated.

For instance, it became common knowledge that neither Göring nor Hitler was prepared to accept the evidence of aerial photographs if it conflicted with preconceived ideas and this 'blindness' appears to have spread to many of the staff. The inevitability of Germany's defeat was clear to all but the most stubborn in the Luftwaffe after the Wehrmacht's final effort to gain the strategic initiative from the Red Army in the (for the Germans) disastrous Battle of Kursk in July 1943. When blamed for the Luftwaffe's shortcomings by Göring, the Chief of the General Staff, Jeschonnek, committed suicide the following month. But the war continued — any adverse opinion offered to Hitler could easily result in an early date with a firing squad.

It is possible that Lange showed impatience for Heigl's apparent lack of understanding of the *Totalinsatz* plan; certainly some antipathy arose between Lange and the new Geschwaderkommodore. This did not deter Lange from discussing the possible design of a suitable weapon with the staff of Gothaer-Waggon-Fabrik, constructors of the successful Go 242 transport glider.

Heigl instructed Lange to report on the feasibility of mounting an early operation using gliders, under the cover-name JOSEPH, with which it had been proposed to destroy hydro-electric plants at Rybinsk and Uglich and a power-station at Yaroslavl. For the attacks on the hydro-electric plants, two of the Go 242C Wasser-Gos

loaded with explosive would be flown by the SO men to be set against the walls of the dams. Lange may have lost further favour with his Kommodore when he deemed the scheme impracticable, because no Luftwaffe glider-towing Staffel had experience of towing large aircraft 800 km by night and there could be no certainty of sufficiently accurate navigation even to reach the targets without aircraft showing indicating lights. A more practical reason for abandoning the scheme was that the dams were low storage systems of great breadth; the dam at Rybinsk was about 200 metres, so for thorough demolition more explosive would be needed than could be carried by one Go 242. Lange met Otto Skorzeny and discussed the project with him.

Skorzeny gave his opinion that the only way to put a stop to the production of the 'E-Werke' was by destruction of the turbines after a surprise air landing, but this would be faced by a larger defence garrison. Such an operation would require the addition of 50-60 men of the SS in addition to some from Lange's SO-Staffel. In fact, Skorzeny transferred some 50-60 Waffen SS troops to Lange's authority; it appeared to Lange that Skorzeny saw an opportunity to begin setting up an SS-controlled air force, separate in its command structure from the Luftwaffe.

The problem of obtaining leadership of high rank remained. It had been long agreed that Göring lacked the interest and ability for his appointment. Reitsch therefore sought an interview with her Führer and was called to Berchtesgaden on 28 February 1944. There she had a three-hour interview with Hitler; at once he objected to the basic *Selbstopfer* idea, claiming that it was not in accord with German morality. Reitsch pointed out that the desperate situation needed desperate measures but Hitler emphatically replied that the situation was not precarious and the time for such unusual measures had not yet come. He gave permission for development and planning to go on so that the plan could be put into operation but only when he gave the order and declared the time as ripe.

The next step was to lay the project before *General* Korten, Chief of the OKL. He made light of the idea but because of Hitler's loose approval, he was compelled to give his own half-hearted assistance. Accordingly, he appointed one of his staff officers, *Oberst iG* Heinrich Heigl to take charge of the project. This was convenient for, with an increased interest in special operations and special weapons by the rival SS, the OKW and experimental stations, centralised control of the *Versuchsverband* Ob.d.L. was essential. It was decided that a new unit be formed under the direct control of the OKL, to operate when required for the RSHA. This new formation, to be responsible for trials of the new 'weapons systems' and for special operations in the widest sense, was to have *Oberst* Heigl in command, to continue with such special operations and the use of new weapons as had been the field of the *Versuchsverband* Ob.d.L.

Many of the 'committed' men expressed their doubts of the Oberkommando's sincerity. They were right — not only were the authorities unable to accept the self-sacri-



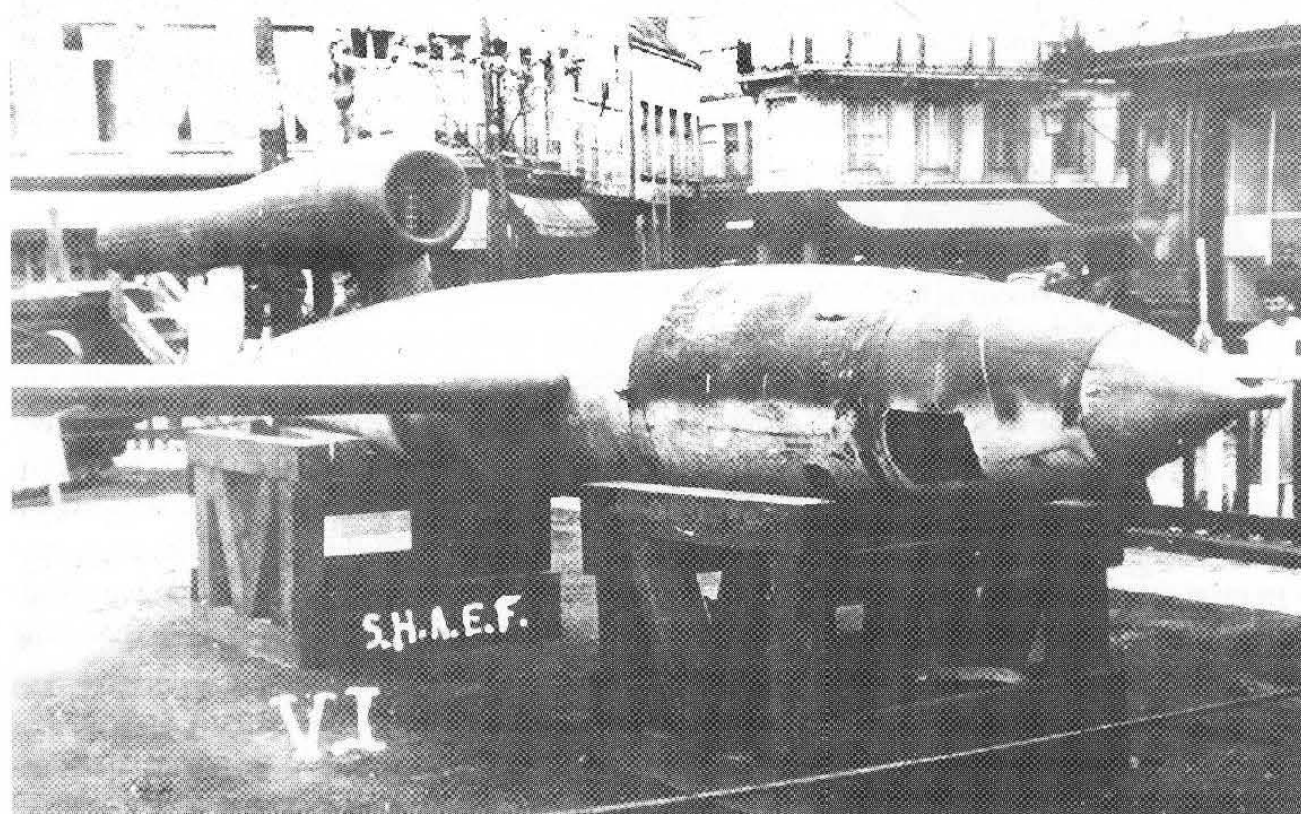
fice commitment but there was only public scepticism for the people had no understanding of Germany's desperate military situation and of the strong measures it required. Completely false communiqués were issued daily from the Führerhauptquartier, assuring them of the Wehrmacht's ability to halt the Allied advances from East and West.

On the few occasions they flew aircraft 'in anger', there were no leave-takings as practised by the Japanese before their final commitment to action against the US Pacific Fleet, but there was a mutual understanding of the dire situation of the Reich. At the end of the war, a man of the Leonidas Staffel (see page 48) wrote for Goebbels' weekly paper *Das Reich*:

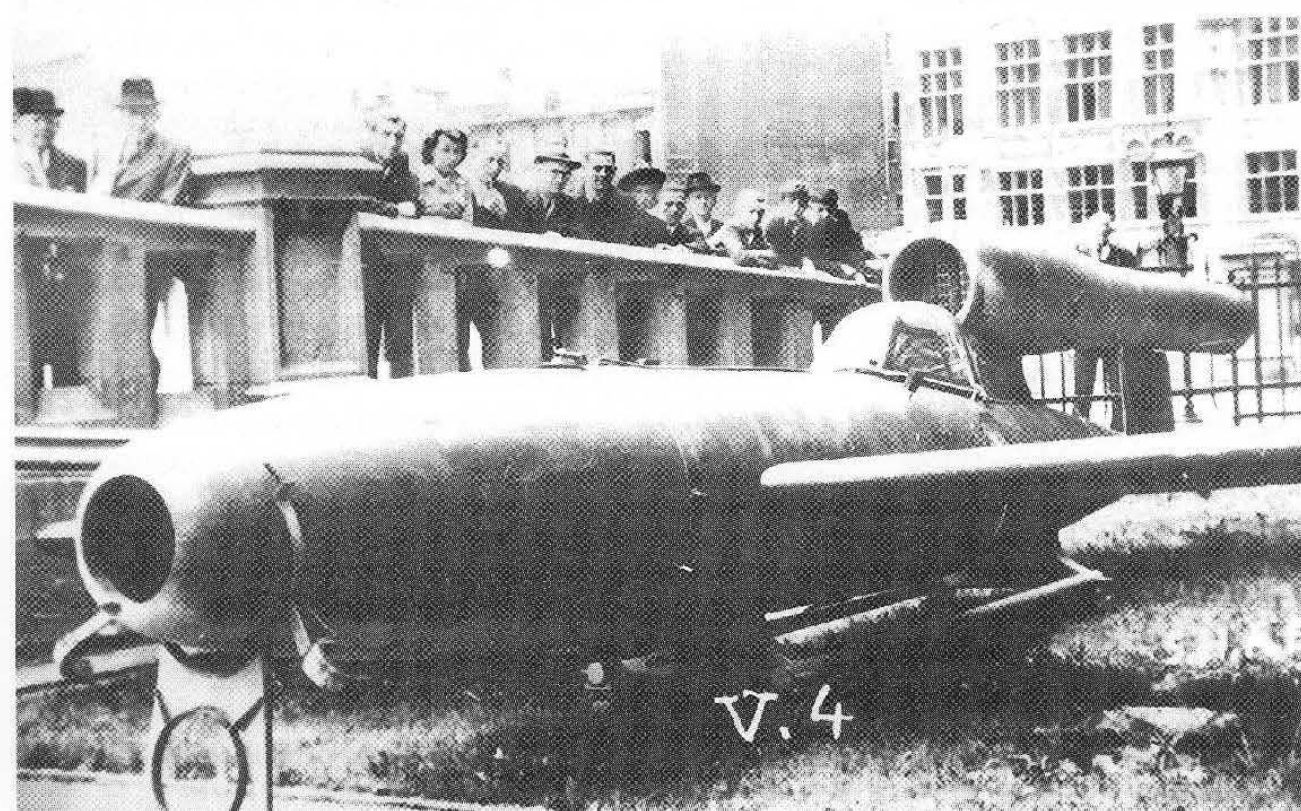
*"I do not intend to make any portentous statements but I believe I have the right to express the thoughts and deep faith of Germans who in these uncertain days have willingly given their lives for their Fatherland. Not only do I think it correct but I believe it is an absolute duty*

*we owe our comrades who flew these missions... The men who were prepared for their mission did so with ease and out of necessity at a point when the war seemed lost to the weak and feeble. They went about their difficult duty with deep conviction. There was no self-destructive urge to escape this life burning inside them..."*

Despite the evident sincerity of the content, the writing now appears to be flawed by a similarity to the rather florid, over-emotional style beloved of, and often written by, Dr Goebbels, whose completely illogical belief in the 'honour' of the 'Thousand Year Reich' so deluded him that there could be no other possibility than suicide when Hitler decided, at the end, to remain in Berlin, rather than make good his escape to Bavaria or Barcelona.



92: Curious spectators view a typical production Fieseler Fi 103 which was placed on display in Brussels by SHAEF immediately post-war. The V-1 was not a precision weapon; German estimates put its accuracy as anywhere within a square of 30 x 30 kilometres. There were numerous sub-variants of the unguided missile with differing warheads. Most were identical externally



93: Accompanying the V-1 above was this manned Fieseler Fi 103 Re 4 Reichenberg, labelled as the 'V4'. It appears to be a fully operational model and is typical of the aircraft which was intended to be the ultimate mount of the 'Leonidas Staffel'. Several still survive in museums





## REICHENBERG

### Steeds for the Spartans

In connection with the provision of an appropriate aircraft for use by the SO men, the Chief of the General Staff ordered the RLM to supervise and direct technical preparations and a Staff Engineer, Heinz Kensche, a gliding expert, was selected. He became a volunteer and signed the self-sacrifice pledge. Then he designated Reitsch to undertake testing and to supervise training as soon as a glide-bomb had been declared acceptable.

The Messerschmitt Me 328 was introduced for use either as a fighter or fighter-bomber and developed jointly by Messerschmitt and DFS (Deutsche Forschungsanstalt für Segelflug — State Glider Research Institute) at Ainring. It was intended to power the Me 328 with two Argus-Shmitt assemblies, but development of the aircraft was stopped by the RLM after the first trials. With input from DFS it was now proposed that the aircraft be used without a power plant as a piloted glide-bomb. It was a single-seat monoplane with a wing span of 6.5 m. Its gliding angle at 250 kph was 5:1 and at a speed of 750 kph, 12:1, as tested at Hörsching near Linz in Austria until April 1944.

In powered or unpowered form, the Me 328 was to be carried into the air attached above the wings of a Do 217. From there the pilot of the Me 328 could effect re-

lease himself and lift the Me 328 away from the Dornier. Test releases were made at heights between 2,743 m and 5,486 m and trials of all kinds of manoeuvres were made at speeds between 137 kph and 750 kph. Aerodynamically the machine compared unfavourably with other fighter aircraft but, for the purpose of Selbstopfer missions, its capabilities were sufficient, especially its good flight stability. So satisfactory was the aircraft that the Flugzeugbau Gothaer-Waggon Fabrik in Thuringen was ordered to begin production. A series of unexplained delays prolonged construction until it began to appear to Hanna Reitsch and the SO men that there was some official obstruction to delay the project. When it became clear that it would take several months before the Me 328 was available in sufficient numbers to be used as effectively as Lange had planned, his volunteers began looking about for some 'makeshift' aircraft that would meet their criteria and could be immediately available.

The V-1 came immediately to mind, modified to suit the purpose. The modification programme began at once under the cover-name 'Reichenberg' and was kept so secret that even the V-1 workers did not suspect the purpose of their work, or so we are told.

According to Otto Skorzeny (who held a watching brief on the Totaleinsatz plan), he suggested that the V-1 could be modified in a matter of weeks. He found that Hanna Reitsch had already put forward the proposal; probably Skorzeny's influence gave the work some impetus. The rapid programme was put under the supervision of Dipl-Ing Robert Lusser of the Fieseler Construc-

**94 Above:** A side profile view showing the clean, if rather bulbous, lines of the Messerschmitt Me 328B. It is unpainted apart from the various protective finishes applied to the different materials used in its construction. Note the small propellers for the wind-driven pumps in the wing root which supplied fuel to the Argus pulse-jets. The landing skid was completely unsprung



tion Bureau, located close to the Henschel aircraft factory at Berlin-Schönefeld. In a frantic 14-day period of effort four distinct variations on the V-1 were finished and ready for flight testing. The fuselage of the aircraft, Fi 103, was not greatly altered — simply a pilot's cockpit and instruments were added.

The four types were:-

A single-seater with sledge runners, without power plant, to be used as a trainer glider.

A two-seater, dual control, without power plant, to be used as a trainer for instructors and pupils.

A single-seater with power unit, landing gear and ailerons.

A single-seater with power plant but no landing assembly, to be used for operational missions.

Reitsch claimed that her offers to test fly the Reichenberg were ignored by the Luftwaffe Testing Division until two of its pilots were twice injured when landing. Reitsch was then called upon to assist and flew some ten flights before being injured in a Berlin air-raid. Her assistant Kensche and Lt Starbati continued the test programme until Starbati was killed in a Reichenberg, then by a Uffz Schenk who came to a similar end. Kensche narrowly escaped crashing, but discovered the fault to be excessive vibration at low-altitude set up by the full-power of the Argus-Schmitt engines. This also indicated why some 30 per cent of V-1s launched against England crashed before reaching their targets.

In spite of the fatality rate, Reitsch declared satisfaction that the Reichenberg would do for the self-sacrifice missions as the principal danger lay in landing the aircraft. The first flights were without power. The Fi 103 was carried aloft by an He 111, mounted beneath the starboard wing between the landing gear and the fuselage, similarly to the V-1s that were launched against England from Heinkels over the North Sea. It was intended to train four or five men to act as instructors for the test.

Elaborate plans for an attack on warships were made. Trials with a mock-up marked by smoke bombs began. An ingenious celluloid aiming device enabled the SO-pilot to compute how far from the target he would have to crash into the water to allow a time-fused torpedo warhead to explode beneath the keel. The pilot would also be able immediately to adjust his angle of attack — to an extent that a ship's anti-aircraft defences would be useless, the aircraft travelling at more than 805 kph.

The training programme, almost to Lange's despair, was begun (by Heigl, perhaps) with no clear purpose. For days the volunteers were put through simple physical exercises, which may have been useful, and pistol practice, which certainly was not. *Oberst* Heigl placed *Fliegerstabsingenieur* Tilenius as supervisor of the project, yet his instructions clearly were to destroy the whole scheme, daily suggesting one idea after another. The SO men remained remarkably constant, ready to die if by so doing they could decisively alter the course of the war, and not to blow up some ammunition train on the Russian front as Tilenius suggested.

Reitsch's first duty was to present the scheme to the Luftwaffe authorities to obtain support, but she met such overwhelming (and unexplained) opposition that it seemed that extraordinary measures would be needed to obtain a hearing. The idea was passed off as 'fantastic', the result of mental aberration. She eventually obtained an interview with the disinterested *Feldmarschall* Erhard Milch whom Göring had appointed State Secretary for Aviation, responsible for aircraft procurement. He belittled the plan, but allowed it to be examined by competent authorities in his Ministry. They, Reitsch and Lange attended a meeting on 27 March at the Haus der Flieger in Berlin with experts from various fields under Prof. Dr. Walter Georgii, Direktor of the Aeronautics Research Academy.

They concluded that the plan was operationally sound, that a manned flying-bomb be used, recommending the Me 328 which would save time in construction and development of a new weapon. They advised that a 907 kg bomb-torpedo should be installed in the nose of the aircraft which could be steered into the water at such an angle that the torpedo would explode beneath the keel of the target vessel. The aircraft would shatter on impact with the water, killing the pilot, and the bomb would tear loose.

At the meeting the question was again raised (to Lange's dismay) as to the pilot's chances of survival, but the matter was not pursued. To his surprise, and possibly embarrassment, on 17 April the Gotha company presented to Lange a proposal, allegedly dubbed 'P55', based on their early discussion, for a weapon which was in effect a 3,000 kg torpedo fitted with a small cabin, rudimentary wings and tail-unit. The proposal naturally met with Lange's approval but the Technical Officer, Tilenius, suggested the equally destructive alternative of a Focke-Wulf Fw 190 carrying an impact-fused 'Bomben-Torpedo' weighing up to 1,850 kg which, he considered, offered the pilot some chance of survival. In fact Fw 190s of KG 200 carrying conventional SC 1800 bombs were later used in action. Soon after, the 'P 55' project was discarded when the Gotha factory was damaged by bombing. The proposal for the Fw 190 (BT) was approved for testing and development — it did not yet exist — despite Lange's reservations.

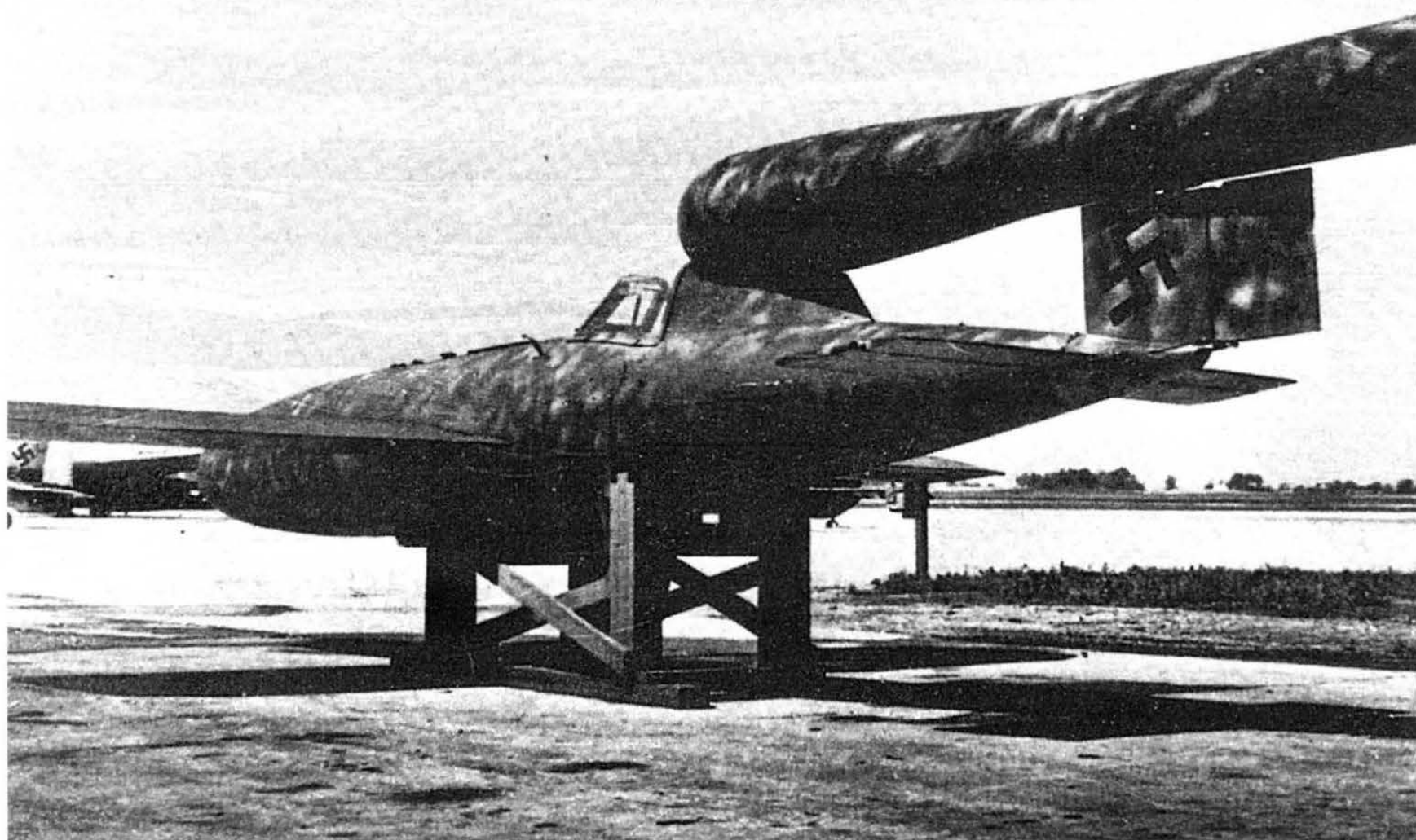
## Reichenberg B

Tension between Lange and the Gruppenstab became worse, largely because the Stab objected to open criticism by Lange of the 'glide-bomb substitute' Fw 190 (BT). Lange was even accused of insubordination and inciting his SO men to disobey orders, although neither charge was followed up.

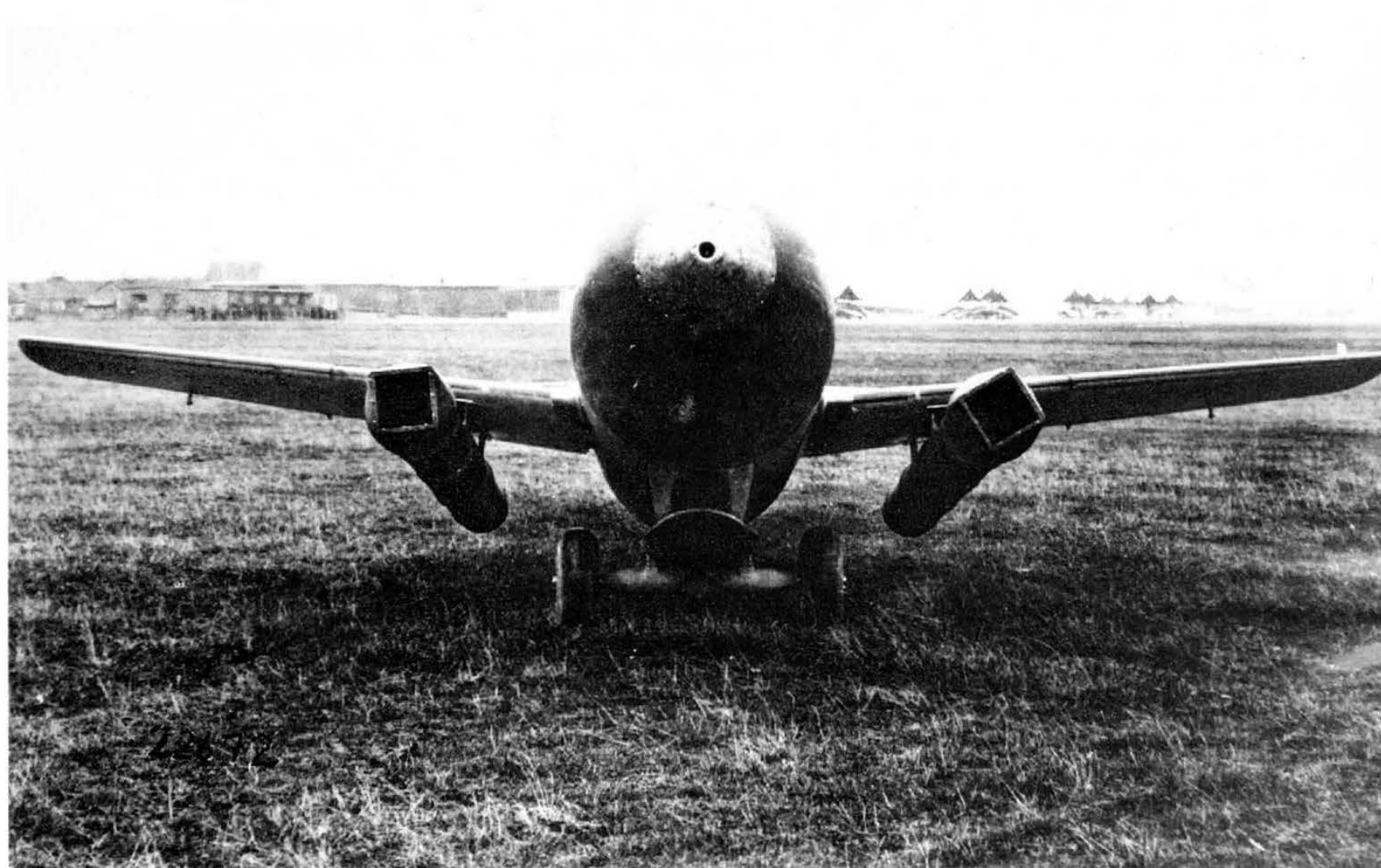
As has been shown, the careful wording of Lange's original volunteer agreement provided a way out for his soldiers if a mission other than one endorsed by the *Oberleutnant* was ordered — to the minds of Allied commanders an extraordinary situation. Neither Lange nor his men were considered duty-bound to take part in a mission with the Fw 190 (BT) and the Geschwaderstab



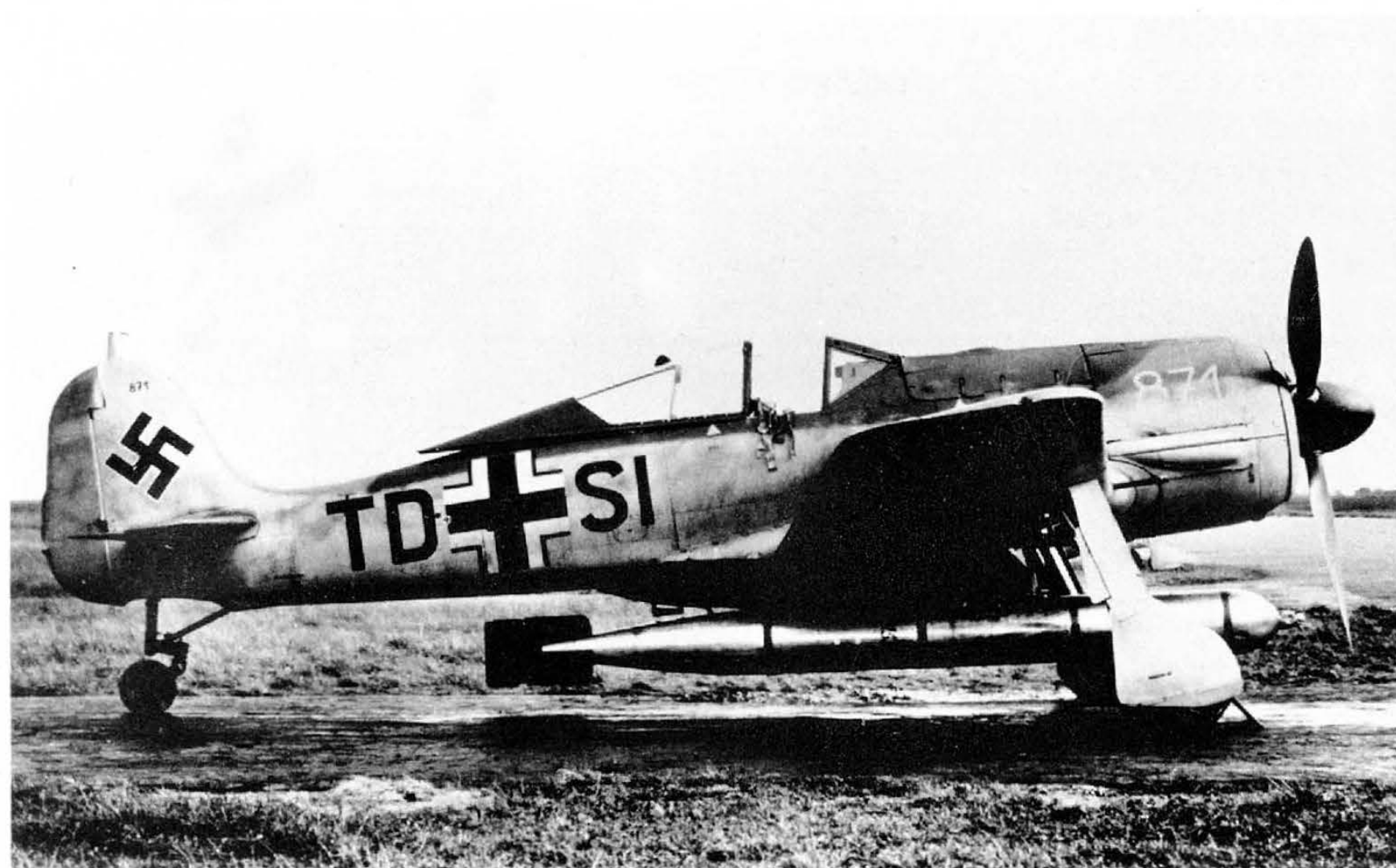
**95:** A Reichenberg on display in an unidentified museum in the USA, most probably Wright Field during the immediate post-war period. The camouflage pattern is very similar to that found on the example which was displayed among the exhibition of enemy aircraft at Farnborough in October-November 1945. No markings apart from maintenance instructions were carried by operational missiles



**96:** A frontal view of the Messerschmitt Me 328B clearly showing the square-shaped intakes to the Argus 014 pulse-jets. Note that these are not mounted in identical positions. Erich Klöckner made several test flights in a prototype at the end of July 1942. He found the aircraft highly unstable in the longitudinal axis, the slightest aileron movement provoking a roll. How an inexperienced pilot trying to aim at a precision target would have coped is open to conjecture



**97:** Probably a far more practical aircraft for the intended missions of the SO men was a torpedo-equipped Fw 190. In early tests the concept of the torpedo-carrying fighter was developed with the aid of this Fw 190A-5/U14 coded TD+SI, W.Nr. 871, which received an enlarged fin and an extended tailwheel. A whole range of production versions to carry BT torpedoes were proposed. Those with the BT 1400 weapon to be known as Fw 190F-8/R15 or Fw 190F-3/U3, those carrying the BT700 to be the Fw 190F-8/R16, F-3/U5, G-3/U5 or F-8/U5





had to admit that the agreement as formulated left the way open for volunteers to go into action only in very limited circumstances.

On 23 August 1944, the problem appearing insoluble, the Ia of the Geschwader, *Maj* Randel-Semper paid a visit to Lange and eight of his men who were then at Ansbach with a cover-name *Sonderstaffel Einhorn*, hoping to obtain their consent for a new agreement to be drawn up and signed. The Stabs officer, it seems, doubted that after so much delay and controversy all the SO men stood by the original agreement. He proposed that in future the OKL would continue development and order *Selbststopfer* missions — therefore all volunteers would have to fly any aircraft or weapon required of them. If they were unable to give such an assurance they would cease to be SO men and would be transferred to other units.

The *Oberleutnant* and his men insisted that they had not changed their minds and nobody was willing to sign a new agreement — none of them was prepared to fly any glide-bomb substitute after uncertain experiences with the unstable Fw 190. Two days later Randel-Semper visited the SO unit at Dedelstorf, setting out the reasons why the Stab and OKL did not consider the present agreement satisfactory. He also implied that the glide-bomb as proposed by Lange had not and — according to scientific experts — could not, be built. So the agreement would have to be worded differently. Consequently, the SO men at Dedelstorf signed a modified agreement. According to Hanna Reitsch this was approximately worded:

*"I hereby volunteer as a self-sacrifice pilot of any aircraft my superiors select. I am convinced that this action will end with my death."*

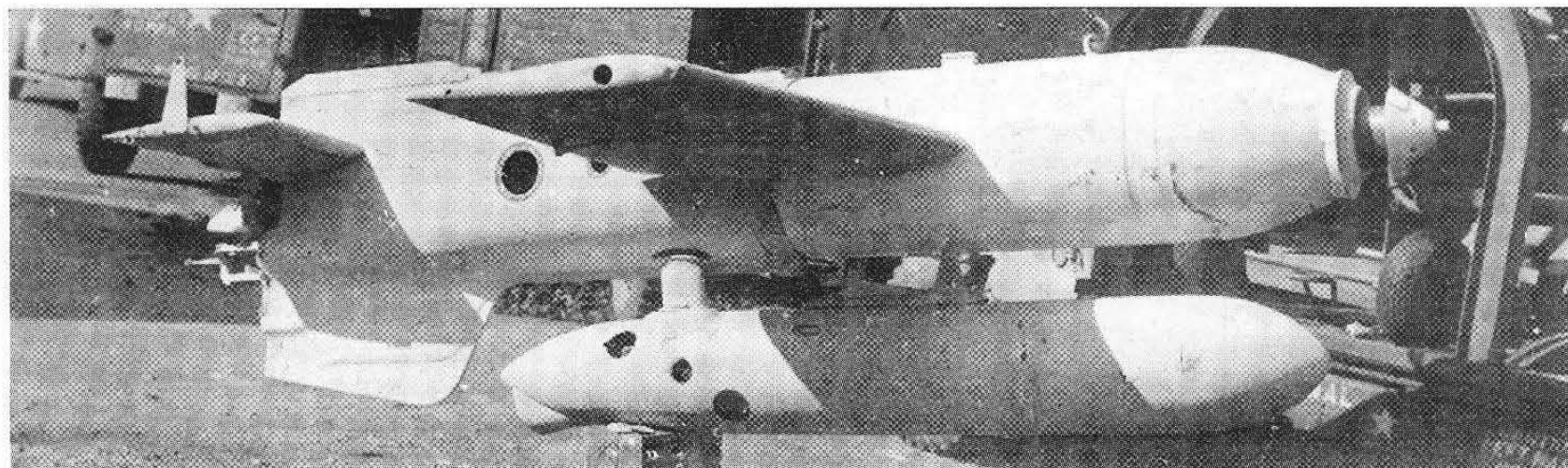
Lange's application to return to his Staffel at Dedelstorf was conveniently blocked because of fears that he would exert a 'negative influence' on the men there. The reasons given to him were that, for the realisation of his ideas he would always have the support of the 'highest authorities', but that for the *Totaleinsatz* the Geschwaderstab could only accept adherence to the rules of conduct of the traditional German military principles, whatever this may have meant. Deviations from this code, he was told, even with the best of intentions, could not be tolerated.

In September, the II./KG 200 Kommandos consisted still of SO men, Lange and seven of his volunteers under *Hptm* Schuntermann at Ansbach, a training unit with *Lt*

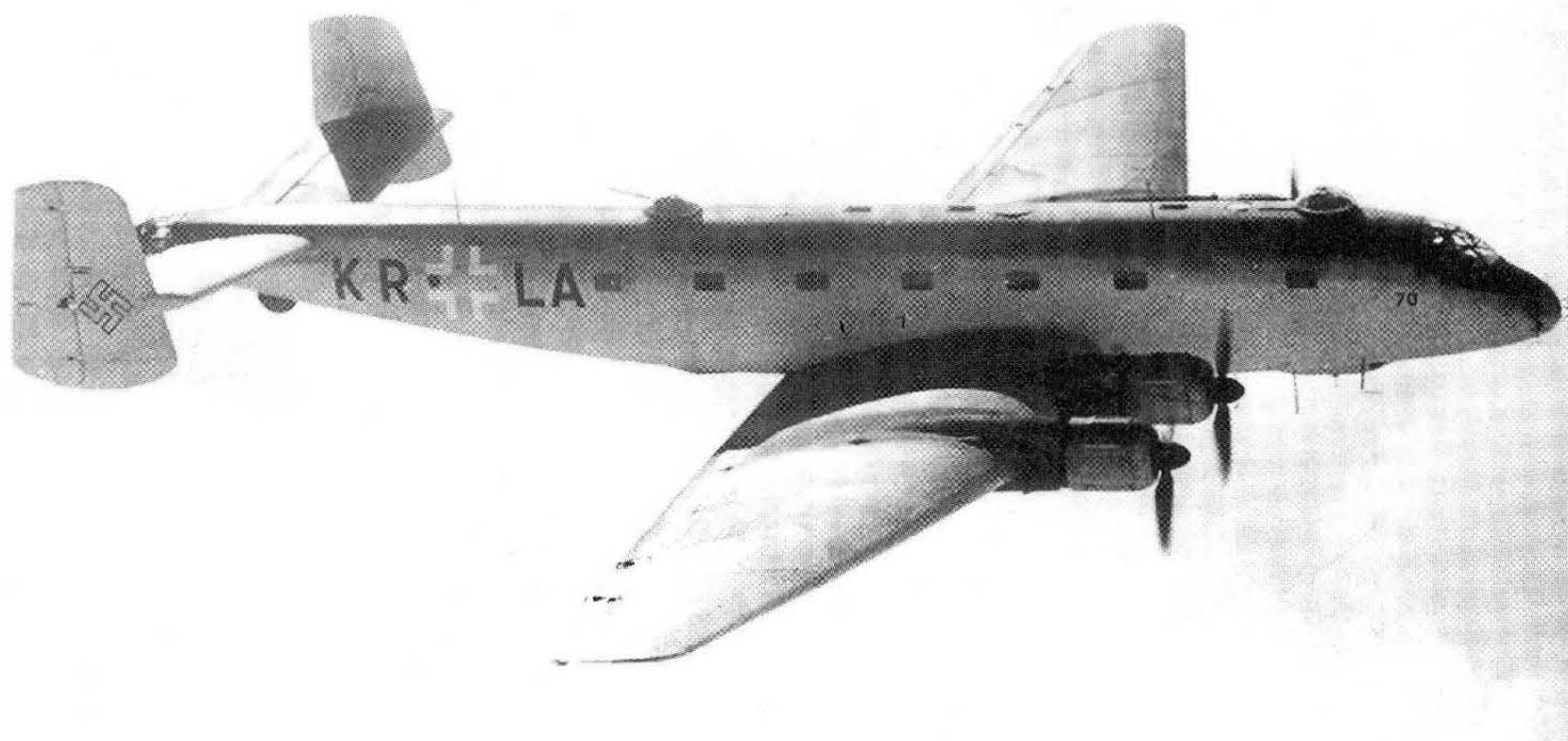
Dahne in command, a further eight pilots under the leadership of *Hptm* Klaweiter and about 50-60 men under *Lt* von Rom.

Lange's further career was blighted when, on 10 January 1945, he was posted from KG 200 to the pilot-training school at Braunschweig. (Apparently, also on 10 January, Baumbach was involved in a discussion which considered using a manned, explosive-laden Ju 88 *Mistel* instead of the Fi 103 as an 'SO-Gerät'). *Oberst* Baumbach of course took over the SO men, most of whom had earlier signed Randel-Semper's 'deception' agreement, and he placed them in his IV Gruppe under command of *Maj* Kuschke. Hanna Reitsch was greatly disappointed in Baumbach, having assumed that he was forward-looking to a war-winning mission. In fact, his concern was for the quick abandonment of any suggestions for the use of *Selbststopfer* men. Baumbach was a realist, however, and he knew that the time for such operations had long since passed. As with many other matters his comment was simply, "*Zu spät!*" — too late!

**98 Below:** Probably the most operationally successful of the new anti-shiping weapons introduced by the *Luftwaffe* was the wire-guided Henschel Hs 293A-1. Based upon a conventional SC 500 bomb, with a Walter rocket motor below, it was instrumental in sinking or damaging at least nine Allied warships. It, however, demanded an operator to guide it and a pilot to fly the carrier aircraft. A heavier guided weapon, the Fritz-X, was based upon the PC 1400 armour-piercing bomb. In the absence of intelligent electronic guidance systems, and time to develop them, it could be argued that using the SO men as missile guidance systems made some military sense at the time







## THE MIDDLE EAST

### Elista and Kommando Süd

#### Elista

Even at this critical stage of the war, with the likelihood of a German victory looking very bleak, the SS/Abwehr was still prepared to undertake quite small sabotage operations in Allied territory, although such actions could have no result that would alter the course of events on the Eastern (and soon, on the Western) Front. Indeed, it seems that some of these operations were already compromised by Soviet counter-intelligence. For example, the loss list of I./KG 200 notes that *Fw* Willi Cremer was killed in action in an operation on 23 May 1944. He apparently formed part of the crew of Ju 290A-9 W.Nr. 0185, A3+CB, which either landed behind Soviet lines and was subsequently strafed on the ground by four Soviet-flown Hurricanes from the 933 IAP, or was forced down by them. The fact that the Hurricanes had flown from a base some 270 km away suggests they had foreknowledge of the Junker's movements. The aircraft was apparently lost but, oddly, no other personnel losses are recorded.

On 10 June 1944, Ju 290A-9, W.Nr. 0182, A3+AB, of I./KG 200 took off from the airfield at Zilistea in Romania for its destination of Elista, capital of the former Soviet Republic of Kalmutskaya which had been dissolved as a political entity by Stalin in 1943.

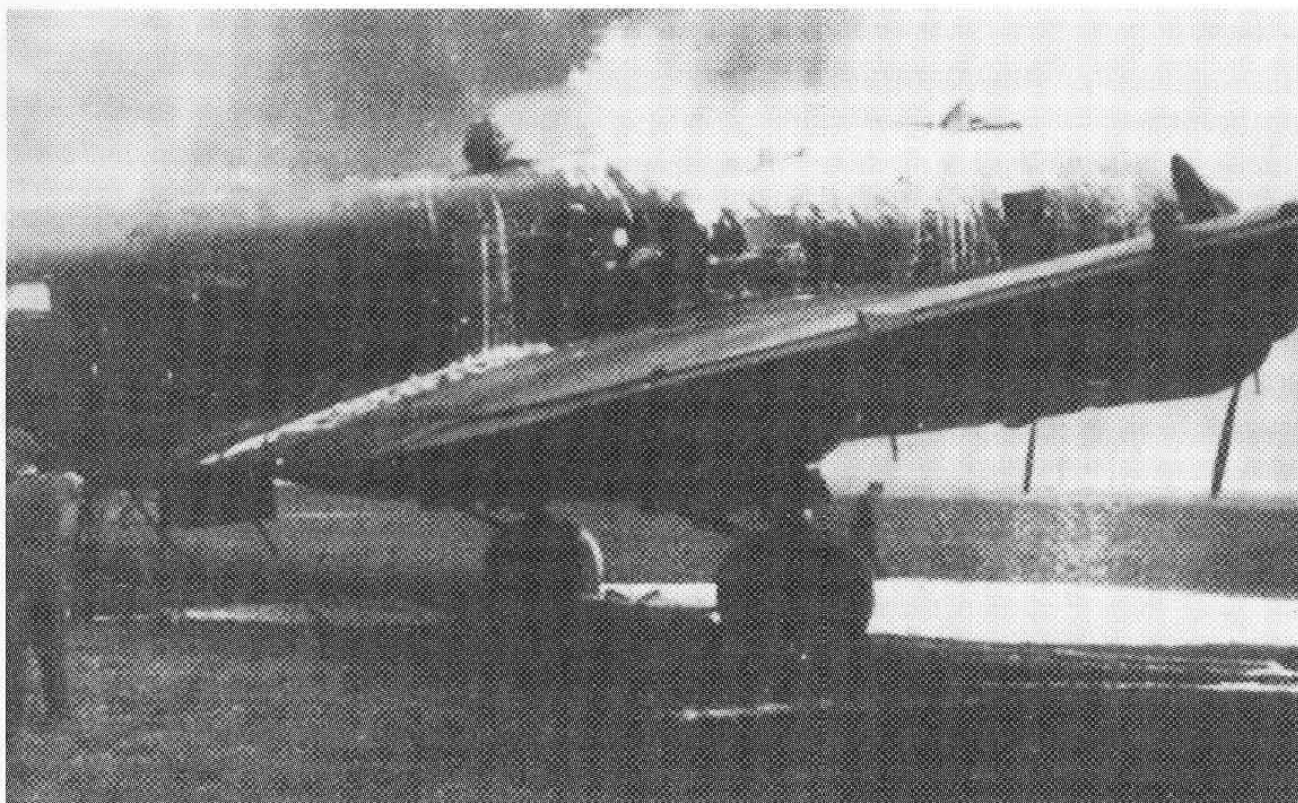
**99 Above:** Ju 290A-5 W.Nr. 0170, KR+LA, was a sister aircraft to the ill-fated Ju 290s W.Nrs. 0167 and 0182. All were of generally similar specification, but it is assumed that an aircraft intended to land in enemy territory would be suitably camouflaged, unlike KR+LA which carries a finish suitable for the maritime reconnaissance mission. Unfortunately no photos of 0182 are known, although W.Nr. 0183 certainly carried overall dark camouflage (see page 80)

The aircraft was flown by *Lt* Heinrich Jenichen with *Stabsfw* Gerhard Thon as navigator. Other crew members included *Ofws* Hans Wiedeler and Willi Melzer. On board were 30 Kalmuks in German uniform under the supervision of an Abwehr officer, their mission being to carry out sabotage in the area of Elista. (It seems this was one of a series of operations involving Kalmuks under the name SALZSEE — Salt-lake). The Kalmuks were embittered opponents of the Stalinist regime and had been fighting alongside the Germans since 1942 when the Wehrmacht's 16. Panzer Division had taken them west.

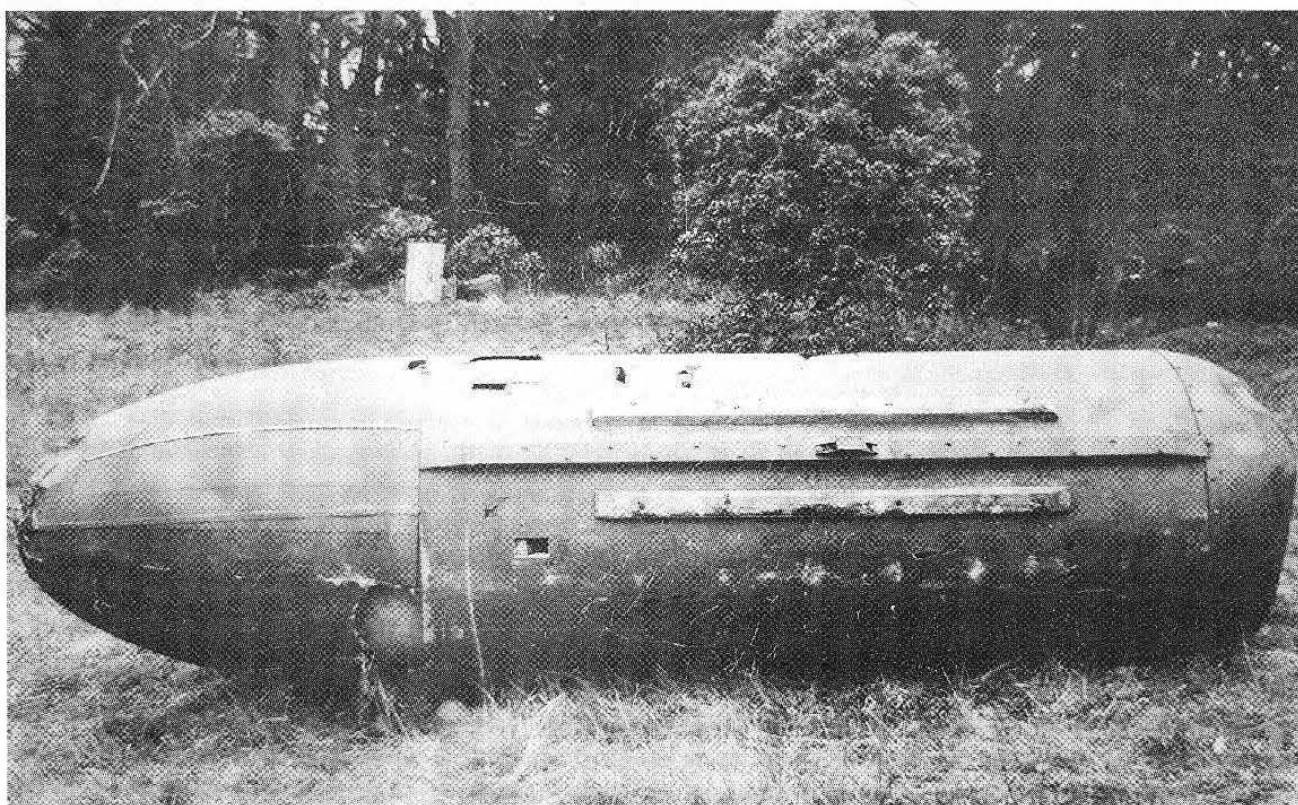
It was intended that the Ju 290 should land and drop off the 'kommandos', and then to be kept hidden by camouflage netting during the day, 11 June, and return to Zilistea the following night. Temporary camouflage of so large an aircraft was virtually impossible and it appears that it was discovered by Soviet aircraft, ground troops going in to overpower the German crew after a brief skirmish. Then, under threat, the radio-operator, *Ofw* Hans Wiedeler, maintained contact with his control centre near Berlin, to request that another aircraft be sent to the landing area because A3+AB was unable to take off. *Hptm* Horst Fitting was ordered to rescue the stranded airmen.

On 12 June he set off in a Ju 252 (another tri-motor transport designed to replace 'Tante-Ju', the ubiquitous and well-liked Ju 52) from Medias in Romania, carrying more Kalmuks as reinforcements. This aircraft was one of two on strength, almost certainly the Ju 252V8, W.Nr. 008, probable code T9+SK. The aircraft later crashed at Petrosani, Romania on 26 June 1944 and was destroyed. After a brief stop at Zilistea, Fitting took off again at 17.10 hours. When he reached the landing area he circled but





**100:** Ju 290A-9W.Nr. 0183, A3+BB of I./KG 200, was severely damaged on the ground at Finsterwalde by an Allied air attack on 11 April 1944. It was sent to Travemünde for repairs. The white foam applied by the fire crews contrasts strongly with the dark overall camouflage worn by the aircraft, which gives a good idea how its sister, A3+AB, probably looked when it was lost in Russia on 11 June. Almost without exception, the aircraft used by KG 200 were uniformly dull-finished and anonymous



**101:** This and the following picture illustrate the Personen Abwurf Gerät, the PAG, which was used to carry up to three very courageous agents while slung from the underwing bomb racks of KG 200's Ju 188s. This view of the device shows the connecting rails on top by which it was hung from the bomb racks. Note the mottle camouflage, presumably in Luftwaffe colours



**102:** This rather grainy picture shows the parachute stowage in the nose of the container. Being strapped in helpless and more or less blind within the container while it was dropped, relying on the parachute to deploy and then the shock absorbing base to absorb impact, all while landing in enemy territory required exceptionally strong-nerved occupants



could observe no movement below and there was no reaction when he fired the agreed recognition signal. With fuel running low, Fitting turned for his home station, where he was told that a further radio message had been received from the Ju 290, claiming that the crew had believed the area was being circled by a Russian aircraft.

More messages were received and three days later another Ju 290A-4, piloted by *Ofw* Herbert Möller, was sent to recover the 'stranded' crew. This was probably 9V+HK, W.Nr. 0167. It failed to return to Zilistea and nothing further was heard of the pilot or his crew.

Surprisingly slowly, the Germans became suspicious that the Red Army was responsible for the radio-transmissions. As a check, the Berlin Control Centre passed on greetings from the radio-operator's wife, but gave the wrong first name. This was not questioned or corrected by the operator from Elista who merely thanked his control; the German crew was obviously in Soviet hands.

The 1./KG 200 had again lost highly valued crews and it was assumed the Kalmuks also had been captured without achieving any of its objectives. *Hptm* Hansen was later reported seen at Prisoner-of-War Camp 27/1, Krassnogorsk near Moscow, by a comrade who asked about the crew members but Hansen had no idea what had happened to them. After the war, the Soviet authorities gave the date of the deaths of all members of Jennichen's crew, as well as that of Karl von Hoegen, who had flown with Möller, as 26 October 1945, five months after the end of hostilities. No explanation was given as to how these men all died on the same day.

## Kommando Süd

On the Eastern Front, there are sketchy records of a few drops by the other Kommandos, but nowhere near the total of operations that remain unrecorded.

A peak of activity came in July 1944 when about 260 agents were put down more than 250 km beyond the fighting fronts. As has already been mentioned, in the East, during the 12 months between October 1942 and September 1943, Abwehr Command 104 had ordered the despatching of 150 groups of between three and ten men behind Soviet lines, altogether perhaps 600 agents. Even the names of the aircrew of the *Versuchsverband* and KG 200 have not been officially recorded — such information has been taken in many cases from their logbooks. Most apply to flights from Toska, with a few operations undertaken on the Finnish and Russian fronts: WOLF, POLIKOV, NARWA and the rest. Most of these flights were repetitious, but no less dangerous for that, and relatively simple in practice, involving agents to destroy railways and bridges and to organise drops of arms to partisan groups. The Intelligence services took seriously the insertion of saboteurs in the often chaotic conditions of the Soviet rear areas where large areas of forest were almost uninhabited and used as hideaways by the partisans. It is likely that a fair number of agents were dropped by means of the PAG, the *Personen-Abwurf-Gerät*. Two of these devices could be carried beneath the wings of the Ju 188, between landing-gear and fuselage.

The PAG was thought absurd when one was first found and handed over to the RAF's technical staff, but it was highly effective for its purpose and a concise note was added to an Air Intelligence Report:

"German Three-man dropping container! A double-walled wooden cylinder with a domed nose of sheet steel, filled with coiled rubber tubing. Main chamber 7ft 9<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in x 3ft 4in diameter. Each passenger strapped into a hammock attached to rings in the inner wall. A heavy iron ring attached to the tail fairing appears to be attachment for a static line which presumably jerks off the parachute storage, a wooden cylinder 8in deep x 2ft 9in internal diameter fitted into the rear of the main chamber. Four parachutes retard the descent, of 96ft circumference."

Internally the PAG was divided into three compartments, bare space for three 'V-Leute' strapped into their hammocks — unable to have a change of mind. The device dropped at a speed of 5-6 metres per second. From first drawings to trials of the first 30 took just three weeks. During 1944, under the supervision of the DFS, these devices were manufactured at a rate of 200 per month, some at Wiener-Neustadt, others in a factory at Freilassing. Most, it is certain, were used on the Eastern Front where crews of KG 200 flew 97 sorties to drop 297 agents. Usually only one PAG ('the live bomb') of each pair contained agents.

There is no doubt that the agents were very brave and very determined to allow themselves to be strapped into a PAG. They would have been aware of the possibility of interception or of damage from anti-aircraft fire. James Lucas has recorded one mission which had to be abandoned because of night-fighter interception. The KG 200 crew, in an effort to escape their pursuers, took the machine higher and higher, forgetting that the agents in the plywood 'bomb' had no provision for oxygen. When they attempted to contact their passengers by intercom, there came no reply. After the aircraft returned to their outstation, one of the agents was found to be dead and all showed the effects of frostbite.

It is not known whether the motorised PAG, intended for landings on water, was ever used operationally. It was equipped with an easily released hatch and an electrically driven propeller intended to enable the two passengers to reach land.

Of the great number of routine flights by the aircraft, usually He 111s of Kommando Maria, later named Wenzel, the archives have little to show, apart from summaries and, as with other detachments, the flyers often remain anonymous. A very few of the operations are recorded and confirmed by the airmen's logbook entries. When writing of the Kommandos, it is difficult to know whether or not the missions should be recorded in consecutive date order, as a 'diary' when the action moves from one end of Europe to the other. Here the alternative step of grouping several operations together for each of the detachments has been taken.

Long after Operation MOSUL in June, on 27 November 1944, *Hptm* Braun flew his Ju 290, A3+HB, from Wiener-



Neustadt to Rhodes-Gadurra, where one of two B-24 Liberators of KG 200 provided the only link with German forces isolated there after the British began landing in the Dodecanese Islands and were established there by September 1943. He returned three days later carrying wounded troops.

For a while after Toska was set up, supply operations were the major concern. Walter Schellenberg, under interrogation after the war, made reference to his RSHA making use of captured aircraft, in a particular case B-24 Liberators which were rarely flown operationally by the 1./KG 200. He spoke of attempts by his Gruppe VIC under *Ostuf* Tschierch to 'insert' two German and two Arab agents into Palestine. He said:

"Many difficulties arose when it came to preparing the actual operation. A permit for fuel for the Liberator which was to be used had to be granted by Göring; one aircraft was found to be faulty and a spare part had first of all to be fitted from another captured machine, and perpetual delays were caused by the constant lack of raw materials. Meanwhile time was pressing, as the airfield in the vicinity of Athens from which the Liberator was to take off was threatened. The surmounting of these difficulties involves a lot of work, which it would be impossible to accomplish had not a higher authority\* been able to intervene."

It is astonishing to find that the Abwehr gave the men only elementary training in the tasks they were expected to perform. Clearly the authorities had no feeling for their agents, most of whom were recruited from the Soviet side and paid for their services. An intelligence officer has been quoted, after only two groups returned to their base, "If the losses were under 90 per cent we were satisfied; if we could reduce them to 60 per cent we should call this the acme of success". Twenty per cent of these agents reported success.

By the end of 1943 the effect of the enormous expenditure of men and materiel on the Eastern Front and the shortfall in the quantity of fuels resulting from aerial attack were becoming a matter of great concern in Germany. The Stab KG 200, partly because it was not part of the usual Luftwaffe operational structure, found difficulty in obtaining vehicle fuels, aviation spirit and lubricants (despite the ingenuity of German scientists in finding 'ersatz' alternatives) to continue with the trials and testing required of the Versuchsverband and its successor formation. That at a time when development of several 'special weapons' needed the setting-up of training programmes for the men to use them.

The Abwehr Hauptamt-Ost 1 organised 'line-crossers' sent on foot beyond the Soviet lines to a distance up to 40 km. Beyond this, the preferred method of insertion was of drops by KG 200. Project ZEPPELIN was a large-scale commitment of V-Leute for which between 1942 and 1944 there were between 500 and 800 agents behind the lines at any one time. Just a few of the air drops have been recorded:

WOLF II in August and September 1944 by Ju 290 from Udetfeld (pilot *Oblt* Ewald Korn, observer *Lt* Hans Arscheid). On 4 February 1945 Clara, in the form of Ju 290A-7 A3+OB, W.Nr. 0186, (*Hptm* Emil Sachtleben and

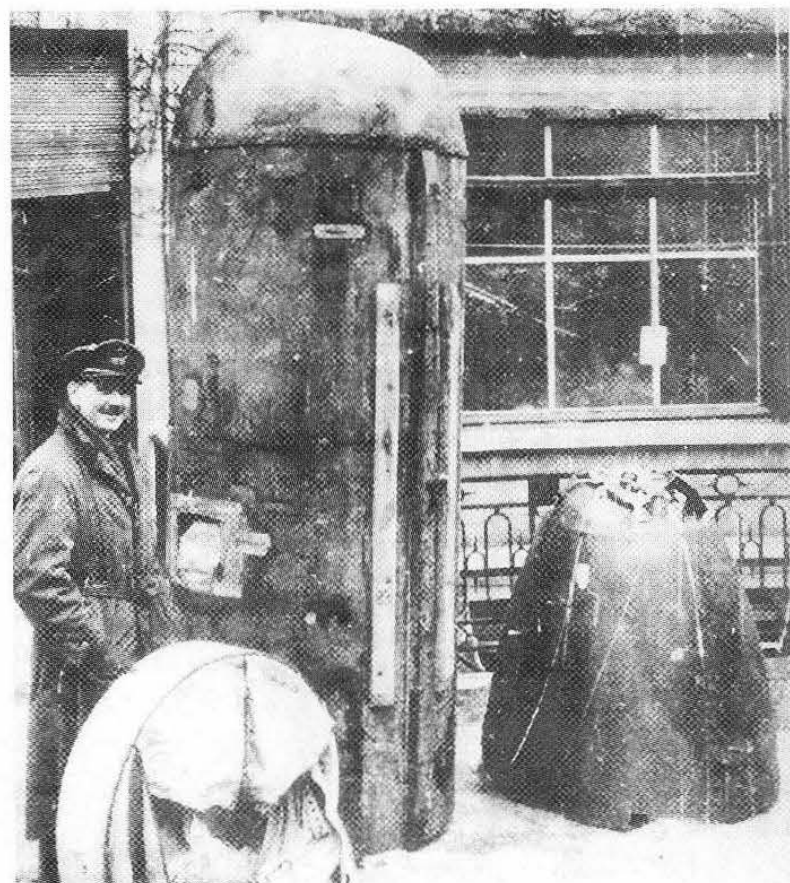
*Oblt* Adalbert Freiherr von Pechmann) carried 14 Finnish officers from Hexengrund (noted as NARWA I, II and IV in the crew logbooks) to be dropped near Lake Peipus, but the exact landing area could not be identified in the dark and the aircraft returned to Stolp-Reitz safely. Similar operations, on each occasion carrying groups of 15 men, were made on 18 February and 20 March. A3+OB, again flown by Sachtleben, carried out its next and final operation when it dropped 15 men on 18 April 1945.

Apart from the disaster of Elista there were few I. Gruppe aircraft losses — the Ju 252V-8, T9+SK, (*Lt* Stellbrink) on 26 June 1944 and the Arado Ar 232B-05, W.Nr. 110017 (*Ofw* Vierus) in September — due to enemy action in the East, but engine fires and emergency landings accounted for a number of Ju 188s and He 111s.

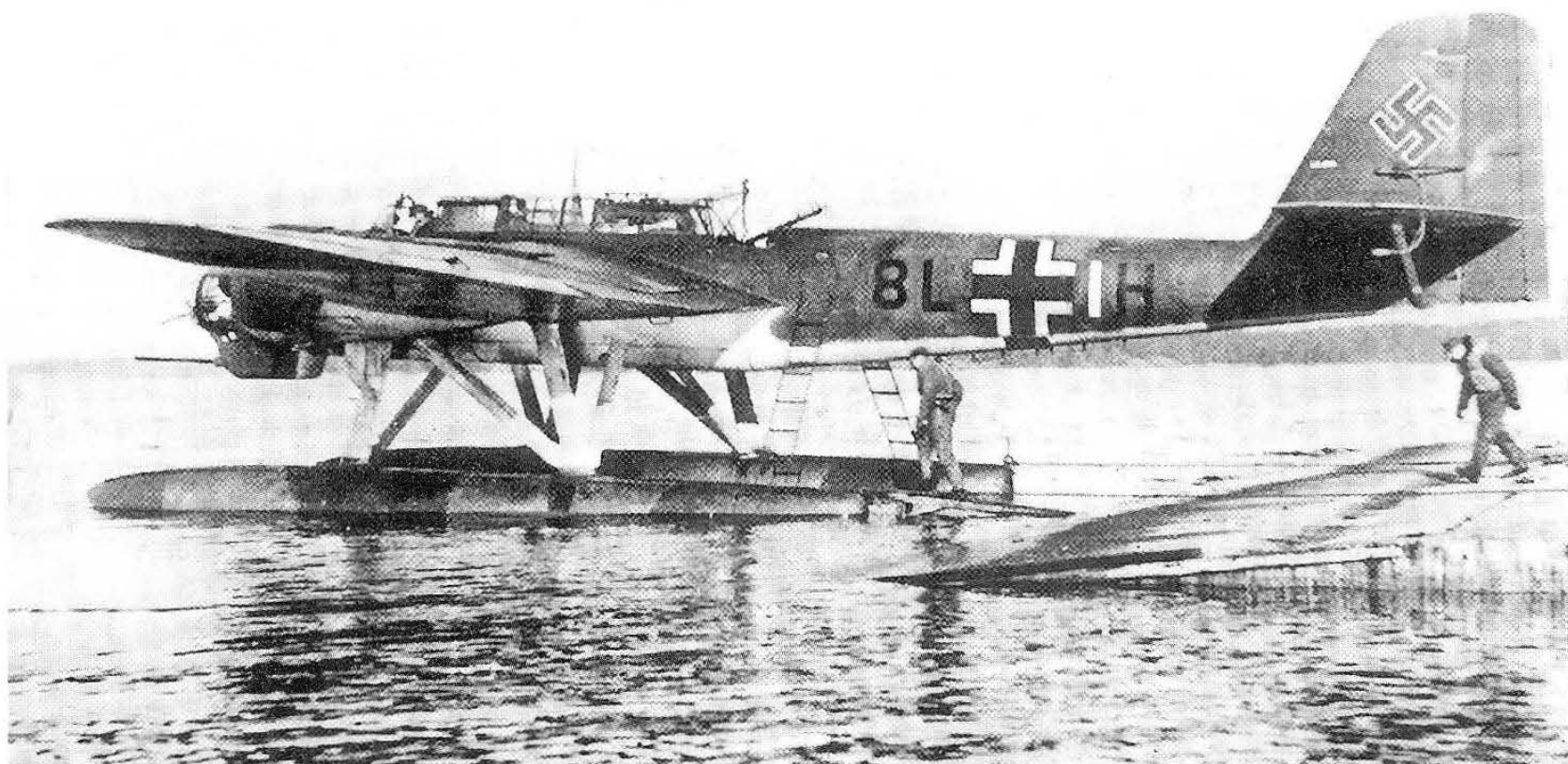
Perhaps because of this wastage, ZEPPELIN was greatly reduced from the scale originally planned. Only 115 agents were dropped by Zeppelin-Süd and many of the Russians who returned from their missions are said to have been shot by the SS when no longer of use.

Altogether, the KG 200 aircraft flew 97 sorties over the Eastern Front, dropping 297 agents in attempts to activate a variety of ethnic resistance groups: Baltic, Polish, Byelorussian, Ukrainian and, in the south, Slovak and Romanian. In the south-east, they took part in drops for 'Operation VUK', the development by Front Aufklärungs Kommando 201 of similar groups in Serbia/Montenegro, combined with sabotage of communications there.

\*This presumably refers to Himmler. Schellenberg also stated that "two parachute drops were made in Palestine, one in the autumn and the other in the winter of 1944" and added that "the first mission had not reported by W/T or other means". There may have been confusion here with *Hptm* Braun's Ju 290 and Operation MOSUL.







## THE MARITIME STAFFEL

### 'Aktion 24'

By mid-June 1944, the 3./KG 200 had built up a strength of five Lehr (instructing) crews and 75 trained or part-trained crews for the 'special operations' which have been already mentioned, but no 'weapon systems' were yet ready for their use. This Ergänzungs-Staffel maintained a variety of transport aircraft including B-17 Flying Fortresses and flying-boats earlier allocated to the Versuchsverband Ob.d.L.

After the French capitulation in July 1940, the Germans permitted the national airline, Air France, to continue limited services, including flying six Liore-et-Olivier H-246 type flying-boats across the Western Mediterranean until the end of 1942. Then the Germans took over these machines, proposing in March 1943 to employ them for much-needed air-sea rescue duties and they were flown to Marseille-Marignane for overhaul. There one of the H-246s was destroyed during an Allied air attack.

Later in 1943 the air force of Finland (Ilmavoimat) asked for the loan from their then German allies of three LeO H-246s.

**103 Left:** An RAF officer lends scale to the section of the PAG which held agents

**104 Above:** This He 115B/C, 8L+III, wearing the markings of 1./Ku.Fl.Gr 906 is seen at Santahamina in Finland. It was lost, with its German crew, on 22 October 1942, when it was sent on an Abwehr operation to rescue a long-range patrol of 13 Estonian volunteers in the Finnish army from behind Soviet lines. Unfortunately the patrol had been caught by the NKVD and the radio operator was under Soviet control when the aircraft landed at Lake Jungozero. All three of the floatplane's crew and an Abwehr passenger were killed, the aircraft itself becoming the subject of study by "aviation specialists"

For operational trials the LeO 246 coded 24+62 was re-finished with a camouflage scheme in which the upper wing surfaces were given a medium grey base with dark grey 'blotches', the upper fuselage and sides remained in their original 'silver', and the lower hull, wing under-surfaces and the entire empennage matt black.

In November four were allocated to the transport role and attached to the 2. Staffel of the Ob.d.L. at Rangsdorf. They were fitted with full defensive armament and given a standard maritime paint scheme of RLM 72 and 73 green 'splinter' camouflage with RLM 65 under-surfaces and the Eastern Front yellow identification markings.

After the operations of the 2./Versuchsverband, Ob.d.L. were taken over by KG 200 in February 1944, all four LeO H-246s were assigned to the 1. Staffel, then two were relegated as reserve machines to the 3. (Erg) Staffel. Two aircraft were still on strength at the end of September. The earlier identity codes 24+62 and 24+63 were replaced by the KG 200 markings, A3+KC and A3+GE. The latter is recorded as destroyed at the Etang de Jonage-Lyon in 1944 but no other details remain of its loss to Allied attack.

The main body of the new 3./KG 200 was stationed at the Seefliegerhorst at Bug on the Baltic island of Rugen in June. The Staffelkapitän was *Hptm* (later *Maj*) Theodor Queens, with officers *Oblt* Frits Messer and *Lt* Wilhelm Busse. The LeO H-246s were refitted by the engineering staff at Bug with two cannon in the bow and two MGs mounted aft. In support were two Do 24s, one He 115 and one Ar 196. Three Arado 196 floatplanes were also loaned to the Finns. Two of these bore KG 200 codes,



A3+AC and A3+BC, the latter being returned to the Luftwaffe in September 1944. The third wore the delivery codes GA+DO.

On the 25th, a detachment under Queens and Busse moved to Rissala near Kuopio in the Kallavesi, the lakeland of Southern Finland, from where several sorties by Finnish personnel were recorded. The move appears to have been ordered by *Korvetten-Kapitän* Cellarius of the Abwehr. There two unidentified Gotha Go 242 transport gliders were also used by 3./KG 200. These were left behind in September 1944 when the Germans evacuated Finland and ultimately found their way into Soviet hands.

A first flight by the Finnish *Kapteeni* (Captain) Paasonen was made on 2 July in A3+KC, but engine failure forced a return and the passengers were put down at night by the He 115, A3+DE. A further mission by Paasonen in the He 115 on 12 August delivered supplies to Tiiksjärvi where army units were cut off by the Russians. On a return flight the next day, Paasonen flew out badly wounded soldiers to Rissala. Although it must be assumed that other operations were undertaken by the detachment, none appear to have been recorded.

By the beginning of September, operations by the Seeflieger-Staffel had effectively ended. On 9 September the Finns began negotiating with the Russians for a ceasefire. They agreed an armistice with effect from the 19th and the 3./KG 200 personnel were ordered back to Rugen, some in an He 115 with the code marking 6H+OK of Fl.Erg.Gr (See) Kamp to Helsinki, then to Reval by sea and on to their base. Apart from a few air-sea rescue flights they saw no more operations. Much later, in April 1945, some were transported to take part in the defence of Berlin but remaining personnel at Bug took off for flights to the West, at 17.00 hours on 1 May. The last LeO H-246 was destroyed by air attack, so only the Do 24s, the He 115 and the Ar 196 reached their goal, Schleswig.

## AKTION 24

In February 1945 the Russians had won several bridgeheads on the western bank of the River Oder, near Küstrin, Fürstenburg and Frankfurt, which the Wehrmacht was unable to dislodge.

The Russians therefore had excellent starting positions for the attack on Berlin and reconnaissance soon found preparations proceeding at a high rate, which the Germans lacked the forces to interrupt.

The few units available to the Luftwaffe were unable to prevent the Russian build-up, and consequently the OKW was obliged to select only the most sensitive places in the Russian supply routes for pinpoint attack. These were the railway bridges over the Vistula, well behind the frontlines, and the Soviet pontoon bridges over the rivers Oder and Neisse. On 1 March this led to a Führerbefehl — Führer Order — to *Obstlt* Baumbach instructing him to attack all enemy crossings over these two rivers. This order gave him the necessary authority to commandeer all necessary materials from any section of the Wehrmacht. Almost immediately the order had to be

extended to the bridges across the Vistula, which were therefore chosen as targets for the first attack.

On the morning of 1 March, six Mistel I, eight Mistel II and nine target markers of II./KG 200 set off in three groups from Burg-bei-Magdeburg to destroy a 450 m long wooden railway bridge near Warsaw. Another, near Deblin, which had been repaired and a temporary wooden bridge some 480 m long, near Sandomierz, were also to be attacked. Unfortunately, nothing is known of the results of these attacks. All the indications are that the bridges remained undamaged.

To help make the attacks more effective, on 6 March Luftflotte 6 formed 'Gefechtsverband Helbig' which combined elements from several units, including 30 Ju 88s from II./LG, Mistel from II./KG 200 and Versuchs-kommando 200.

In the same order, the Geschwaderstab of LG 1 was converted to the 'Einsatzstab Brückenbekämpfung' — 'Stab Bridge Attacks' — based at Treuenbrietzen, *Oberst* Helbig being appointed deputy to Baumbach.

In the following weeks units from 'Helbig' attacked bridges over the Oder and Neisse and possibly a few times those on the Vistula. Acute shortages of fuel, however, restricted the number of attacks. Success was hard to come by; there were near misses but few direct hits on account of the heavy enemy anti-aircraft fire and fighters over the targets. There were also technical problems with the Mistel and it was found that the temporary pontoon bridges were quickly repaired by the Russians.

At the end of March, Baumbach halted all Mistel attacks on the temporary bridges as useless — only solid permanent bridges were worth the effort. Even then, considering the success rate, Helbig considered the methods of attack as doubtful. Consequently, the new watchword was 'suicide attacks'.

Helbig had suggested on 5 March using only Fw 190s and Bf 109s, but by the end of March a brand new type appeared on the roster of Gefechtsverband Helbig — the Dornier Do 24 flying boat. With this type it was intended to attempt a highly secret operation, code-named 'Action 24', the objective of which was the destruction of the railway bridges over the Vistula.

To lead the operation one of the most experienced fighter pilots of LG 1, now from the Einsatzstab Brückenbekämpfung, *Hptm* Güttler, was chosen. The location selected as the base for the operation was the marine aircraft establishment and test centre at Rechlin on the Müritzsee. The most urgent requirement, however, was for SO men, as the idea was that AKTION 24 should aim a Do 24, fully laden with explosives and flown by a pilot and an SO man, straight into the Vistula bridges.

Karl-Heinz Lange, the leader of the SO men, had been posted away from KG 200 in January, and the rest of the SO men had been dispersed to other units. Many had been sent to 4./Erg.KG (J) in Pilsen in Czechoslovakia to be retrained on Fw 190s. There they were found again at the end of March by *Hptm* Güttler, who recruited five volunteers for the Do 24 mission under the leadership of *Oblt* Robert Eck. They were sent immediately to Rechlin.



In the meantime it had been realised that the inexperienced SO men would not be able to start up a fully-laden Do 24, navigate and find the bridges at low level and land safely at daybreak on the Vistula. It was therefore necessary to find experienced flying boat pilots who could bring the aircraft to their targets.

This time volunteers were not called for — instead an order was sent to four air-sea rescue pilots who happened to be at the former marine flying school FFS(C) 17 base at Pütznitz, by then serving as the assembly point for marine aircraft pilots. The four pilots selected were *Fw* Niethammer, *Fw* Hildebrandt, *Fw* Reif and possibly *Ofw* Sporn. Reif reported:

“On Easter Sunday April 1945, I was ordered to fly from Pütznitz to Rechlin. What was remarkable was that instead of the usual six-man crew I had only a flight engineer with me. At that time I had no idea what the task was to be.”

On 1 April the other pilots also flew their Do 24 aircraft to Rechlin; for what purpose they knew no more than Heinrich Reif. As Reif landed he found the other flying boats already on the Müritz. While his flight engineer returned immediately to Pütznitz, Reif remained in Rechlin where, to his great surprise, he found the other ASR pilots. It appeared that they had each been secretly ordered to Rechlin.

Besides the Do 24 pilots, during the day, the SO men also arrived. They included *Lt* Eck and *Uffz* Resag, Noltemayer, Sirnsen and Strange. They had made a stop halfway through their journey at Jüterbog to see the Chief of the Luftflottenkommandos, Ritter von Greim, who gave them the first indications of their intended mission. The full details were given to them on the evening of their arrival at Rechlin. *Oberst* Helbig briefed them personally on ‘Aktion 24’. The plan was that the Russian supply routes to their forces were to be stopped by destroying the vital railway bridges over the Vistula at Thorn, Warsaw, Deblin and Dunajec, east of Cracow. Heinrich Reif recalled:

“The flight was to be carried out as follows: each aircraft was given a target bridge. I got the one at Thorn as the most northerly target. Besides the pilot there was a second pilot, the SO man, who had never flown a Do 24. The actual pilot, ie myself, was to land several hundred metres upriver from the bridge, then leave the aircraft by means of an inflatable dinghy and row for the shore. The SO man was then supposed to run the Do 24 under the bridge and ignite the explosives. I, on the other hand, was ordered to make my way to the Danzig Bight after I had reached the shore, there to be collected by a U-boat. I also had a Polish identity card with the added information that I was deaf and dumb, as I neither spoke nor understood Polish.

“The details as to how we four Do 24 pilots should save ourselves left us feeling very uncomfortable. Even if the morning mist obscured things, the Russians were bound to notice our Do 24 flying towards the bridge, possibly stop and then launch a boat. Observers on the bridge would then see what was happening on the

river and capture could only be a matter of time.

“Considering how near we were to the bridge, it raised the further question of how long the Russians would wait before opening fire on an unidentified aircraft slowly rolling towards the bridge? But these questions no-one could answer. At the end of the discussion all present were reminded of the need for absolute secrecy; there was to be no information to others, nothing was to be entered in our logbooks.”

In spite of these admonitions, one of the Do 24 pilots, *Fw* Hildebrandt, wrote a short letter on 3 April to a female acquaintance which left no doubt of the type of operation he was about to undertake. The letter shows how Hildebrandt judged his chances of survival:

“I flew here and now belong to a special Kommando. Maybe this will be my last action. What is about I cannot tell you, we have been sworn again to secrecy. I can only tell you that it will be the most dangerous action. My chances that I will return safely are extremely small. If that is the case you will hear something after weeks or months in the Wehrmacht report about it. When it is to happen I don’t know yet.

I assume that I can give you my address where you will be able to enquire about my fate. This makes you the only one who will be able to tell my family what happened to me; then after the action you may get more details if you ask for them.”

Between 2 and 4 April the Do 24s were made ready for action. The fuselage was loaded with 42 boxes of magnesium and seven boxes of dynamite. An ignition cable was laid into the pilot’s cockpit; from there a switch would detonate the load. To counteract the added weight, all unnecessary equipment was removed, this included the gun turrets. After the conversions were finished the aircraft were to be moved from Rechlin to a camouflaged bay at Röbel on the western shore of the lake. On the morning of 4 April, *Fw* Heinz-Ottokar Hildebrandt’s Do 24T-1, W.Nr. 24, was loaded with its highly inflammable cargo and then ran up its engines before taxiing to a camouflaged site on the Müritz.

The quiet, smallish pilot from an East Prussian forester family was just moving his aircraft when there was an air raid warning. Almost immediately, American P-51 Mustangs from the 354th FS strafed the place from very low level. In spite of heavy anti-aircraft fire they shot up several Ju 88s, setting them on fire, before departing westwards to Müritz. At 09.40, about two kilometres west of Rechlin, they encountered the Do 24 of *Fw* Hildebrandt on the water. 2nd *Lt* Bonhorst later wrote in his combat report:

“...our flight discovered a Do 24 on the Müritz See. It was taxiing in the direction of the western shore when we attacked...”

For the Do 24 no escape was possible; a whole formation of Mustangs attacked the flying boat until it was shrouded in flames as it moved across the water. *Fw* Hildebrandt was killed. In spite of the fierce attack, the dynamite did not explode and the Do 24 carried on with engines running until it beached near Röbel. ‘Aktion 24’



had its first victims. The loss of an experienced air-sea rescue pilot who had served with both 9. and 2. Seenotstaffeln (where he had saved 95 lives) came as a great shock to Hildebrandt's comrades, especially for Reif who had seen it all from his shelter.

In the days following, the men waited for action but all was quiet. In spite of the common task there was hardly any contact between the ASR pilots and the SO men. Training or tactical discussions did not take place, except for some instructions to the SO men. The remaining 'explosive Do 24s' remained in their camouflaged bays.

On the afternoon of 10 April, the air raid siren howled again at Rechlin. A little later, 159 B-24 bombers of the US 2nd Bomb Division dropped their deadly cargo over the base and did serious damage, the last bombs falling at about 15.10 hrs. After this, the escorting fighters strafed the airfield. Among them were Mustangs of the 61st FS, who departed in a westerly direction. Capt Bond of the Squadron described what happened next:

*"... Yellow and Blue Flights pulled up right and discovered in a bay about 8km north-west of Rechlin, 3 Do 24 flying boats. These were attacked from east to west. I attacked the aircraft on the extreme right, firing until it was aflame. After I had flown over the Do 24 it blew up with an enormous explosion."*

The American fighters had discovered the 'explosive Do 24s' of Gefechtsverband Helbig. The attacks did not stop until all the flying boats were destroyed. If the American report is correct and two Do 24s exploded, and the third sank burning, then the loss of lives must have been heavy as many technicians were still on board.

To the watchers of 'Aktion 24' at Rechlin it was all too apparent what had happened — before it had started the operation had met a sudden end — but not without human losses. With no more Do 24s to be found, the surviving pilots were spared being killed in a futile operation. The remaining SO men were sent back to Jüterbog, while the marine pilots were transferred back to SNG 81, an ASR unit.

In fact another Do 24 may have been found or one may have been missed by the Americans for it is a fact that *Fw* Reif flew one, still fully loaded with explosives, with Sporn and Niethammer to Parow near Stralsund in search of SNG 81. By then that unit was at Bug-am-Rügen where an Me 410 and two Do 24s still remained in the harbour, which were still there when Reif and his comrades eventually reached Bug. Sorn and Niethammer were instructed to fly these Do 24s, all three machines then making for Guldberg in Denmark.

And so, on the morning of 5 May 1945, the last Do 24 of SNG 81 landed and all fell into British hands.



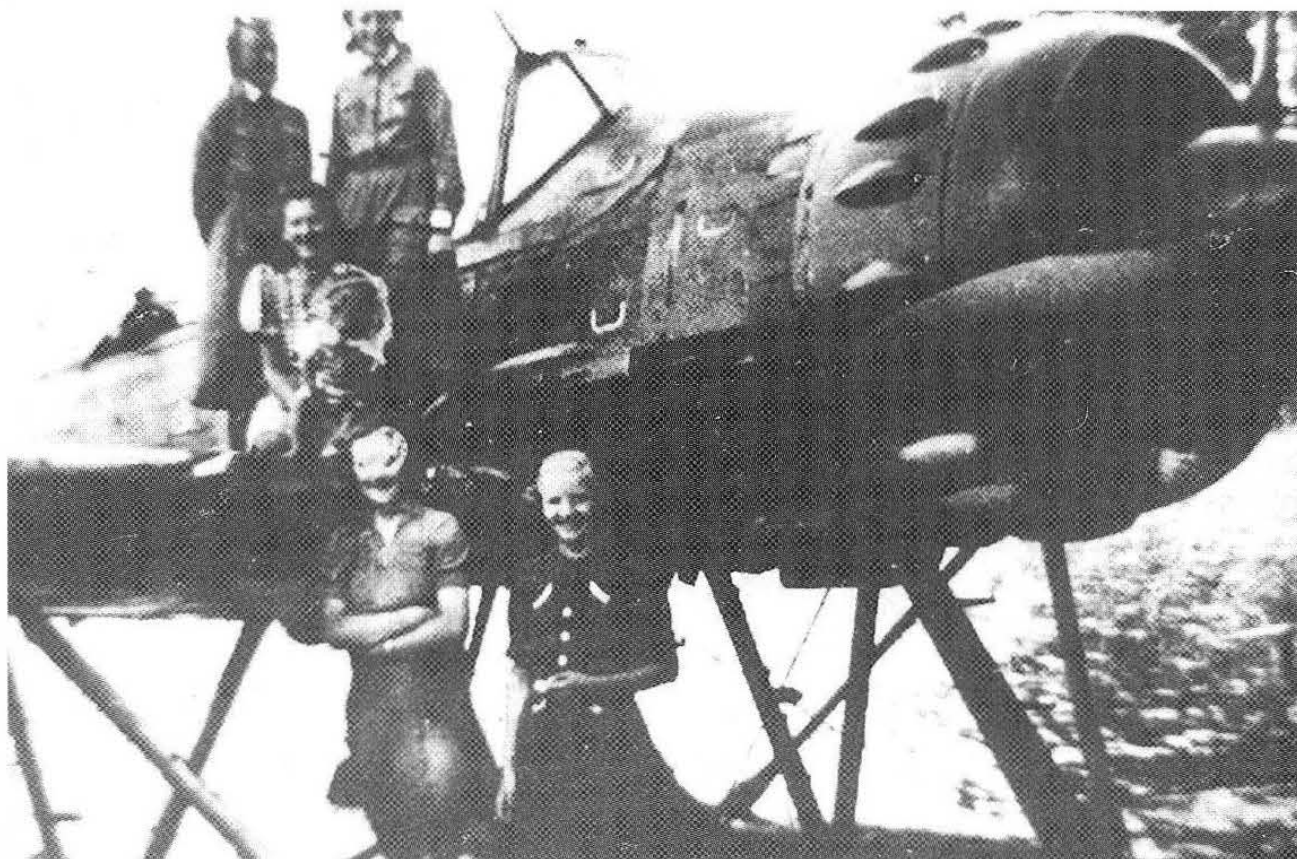
**105:** Found beached and abandoned at the war's end at Schleswig, A3+?? was probably one of the four Do 24s on the strength of 2./KG 200 in November 1944. By the end of December only two were serviceable. Presumably the original pilots were no longer available by the time ASR pilots were called up to fly in AKTION 24



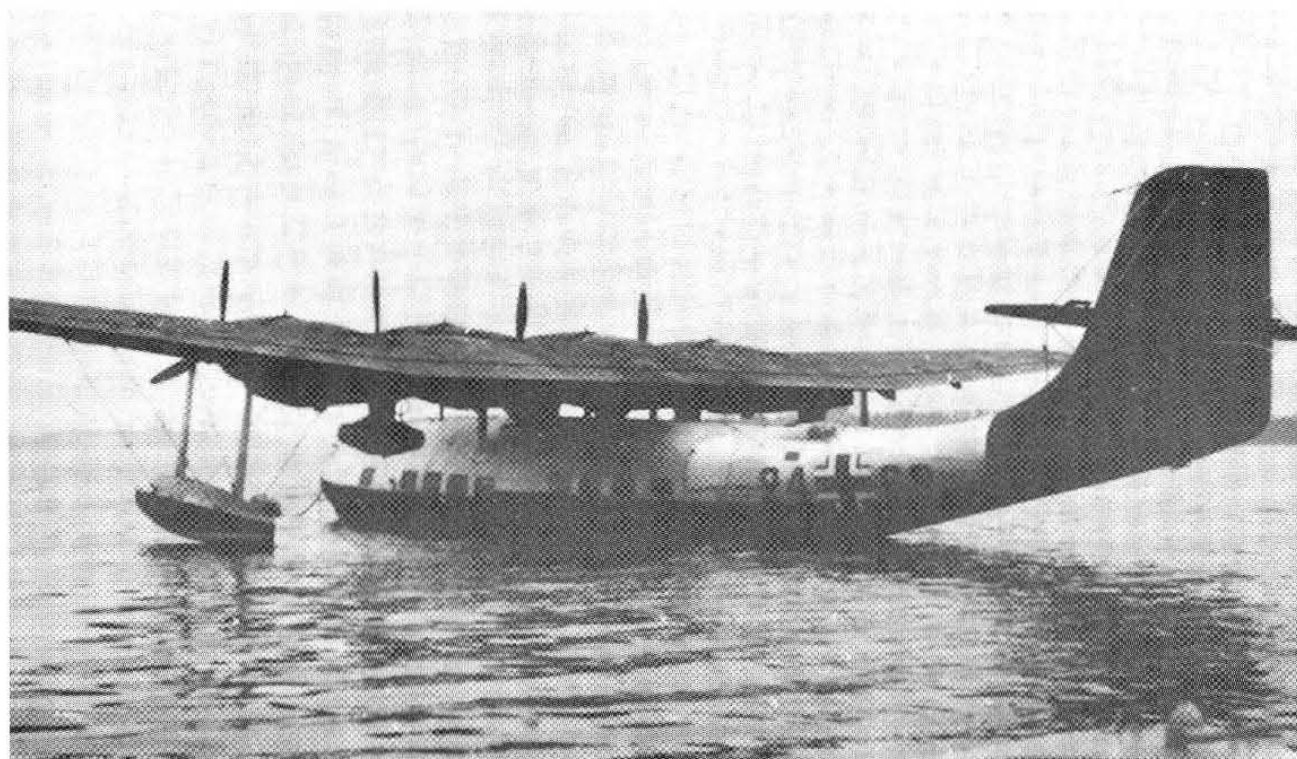
**106:** No pictures are known of the two Gotha 242 gliders which served with the maritime staffel of KG 200 but they probably looked just as anonymous as this example found abandoned on the Eastern Front



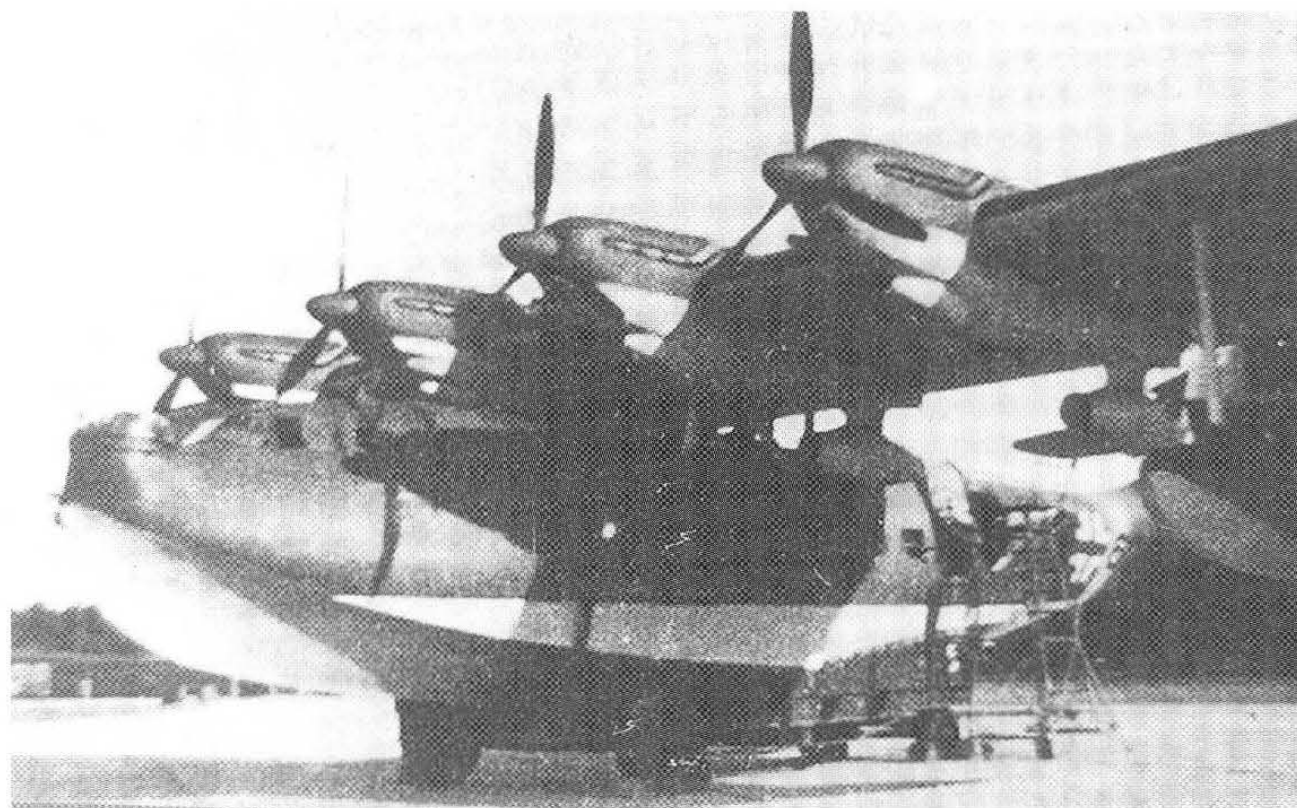
**107:** A poor quality but unique picture of one of the Arado Ar 196 floatplanes on the strength of KG 200 and loaned to the Finns. This is A3+BC, probably at Santa-hamina in mid-1944



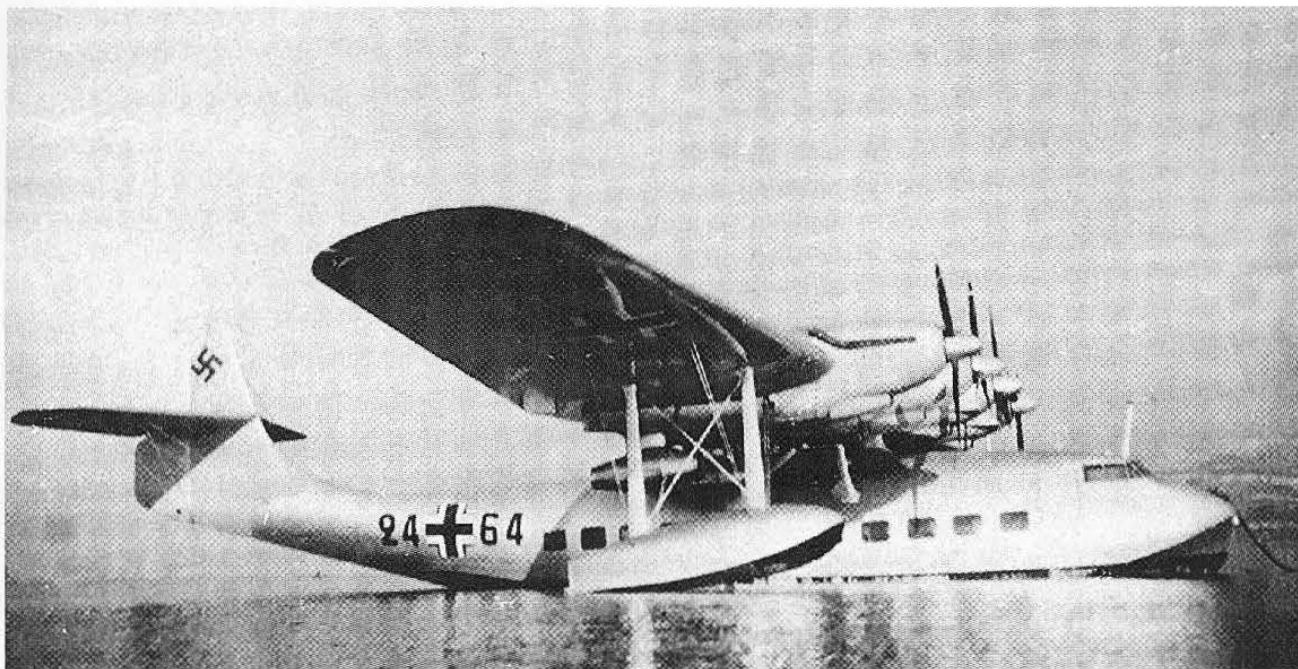
**108:** This picture shows one of the French LeO H-246 flying boats on detachment to the Finnish Air Force for trials as partisan transports. As seen here in 1943, 24+62 wears black undersides with a non-standard mottle camouflage pattern on the wing upper surfaces. The tail is all-black, presumably to cover the all-yellow tail habitually worn by captured aircraft used by the Germans. Yellow wing and fuselage theatre markings were also worn. The aircraft were found, however, to have too deep a draught for Finnish operating conditions and were returned



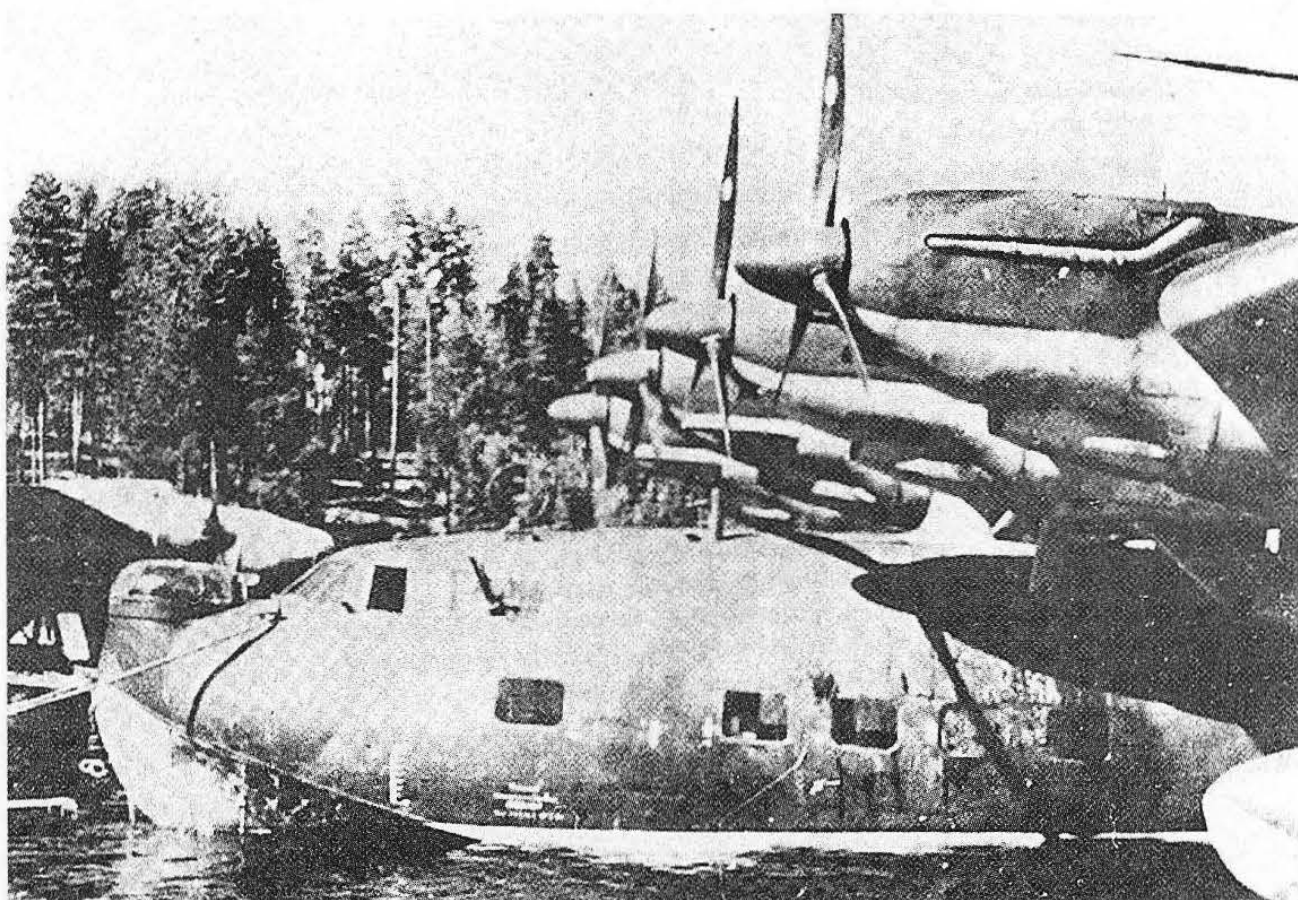
**109:** Seen out of water the deep hull of the LeO H-246 is immediately apparent. This is 24+63 (just visible on the rear fuselage) after it had been modified with armament and Luftwaffe maritime camouflage, possibly seen at Bug am Rugen in late 1943. It was later issued to 3./KG 200 as A3+GE, sometime in 1944. Of the six LeO 246s acquired by the Germans, it appears that one was sold to Bulgaria in November 1943 for use as an air ambulance. One was lost during an Allied air attack in France, the remainder all eventually went to KG 200



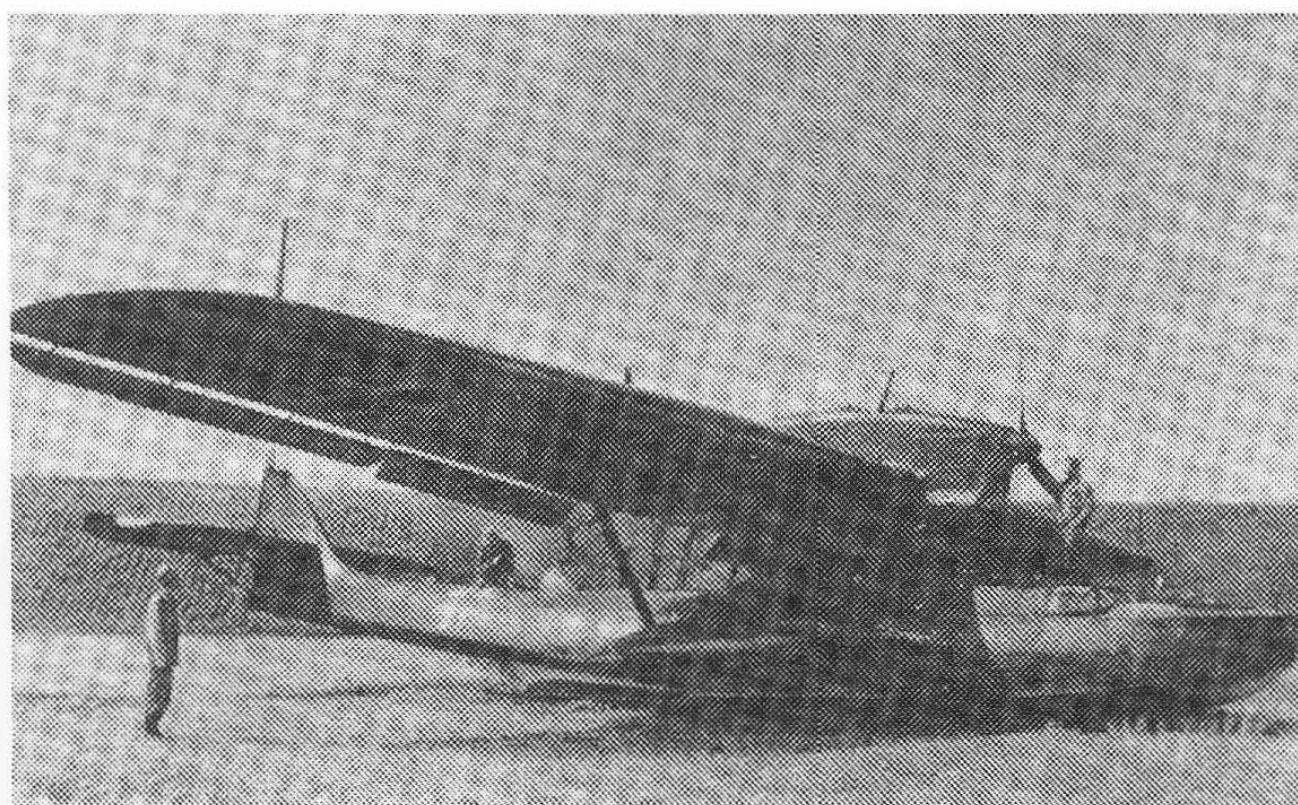




**110:** Another of the LeO H-246s loaned to Finland was 24+64, which is believed to have later received the KG 200 code A3+EC. It is seen here, probably at Marseille, before delivery to the Finns and in standard German finish for captured aircraft in the non-operational role, i.e. overall silver or grey with large areas of yellow on the tail and wings. The code identifies it as the fourth of its type (246-4) in use with the Germans



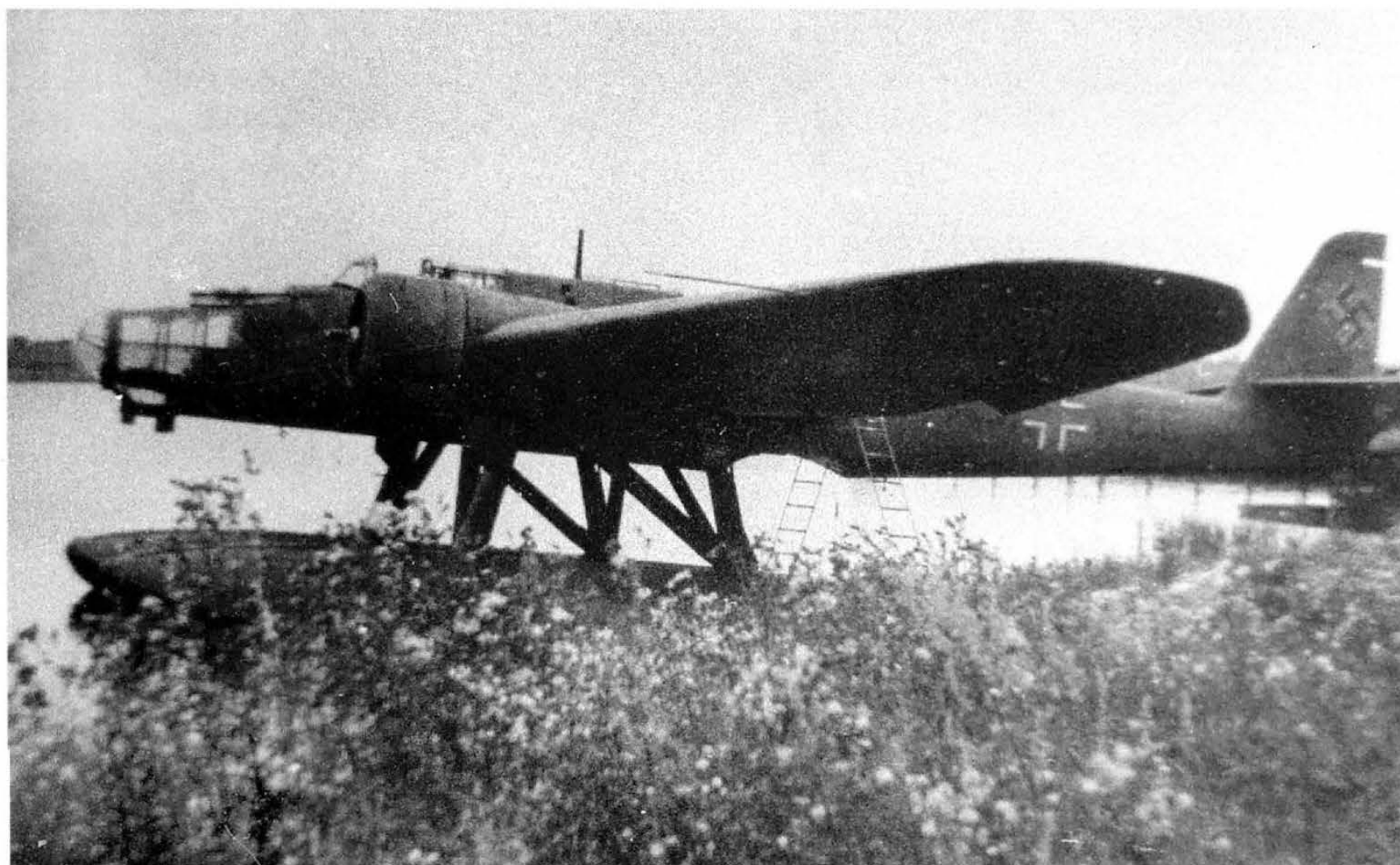
**111:** This is 24+64 after it had received a nose turret and beam guns as well as Luftwaffe maritime camouflage. The location is believed to be Rissala in Finland in 1944, by which time it was probably wearing the KG 200 code A3+EC. At times it seems that Finnish crews operated the aircraft. Note the Plimsoll line on the bow, indicating that loading of the machine was fairly critical, which may explain why they were not particularly successful in the shallow Finnish lakes



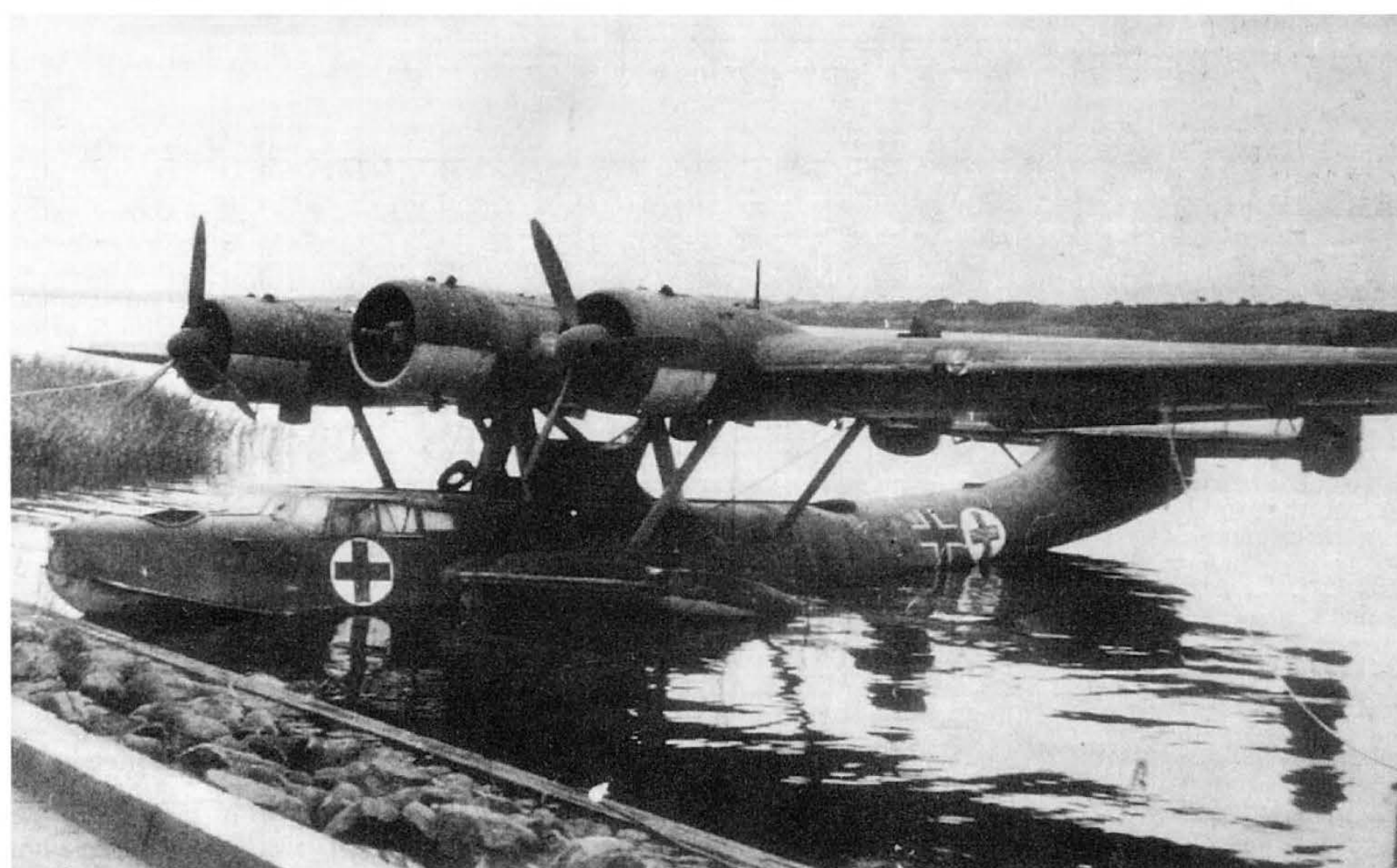
**112:** This Dornier 18D, coded RU+KH, was allegedly in service with 3./KG 200 when it landed on wet grass at Wilkede in Germany on 4 May 1945 after flying in from Schleswig. There is, however, no other documentary evidence to support this



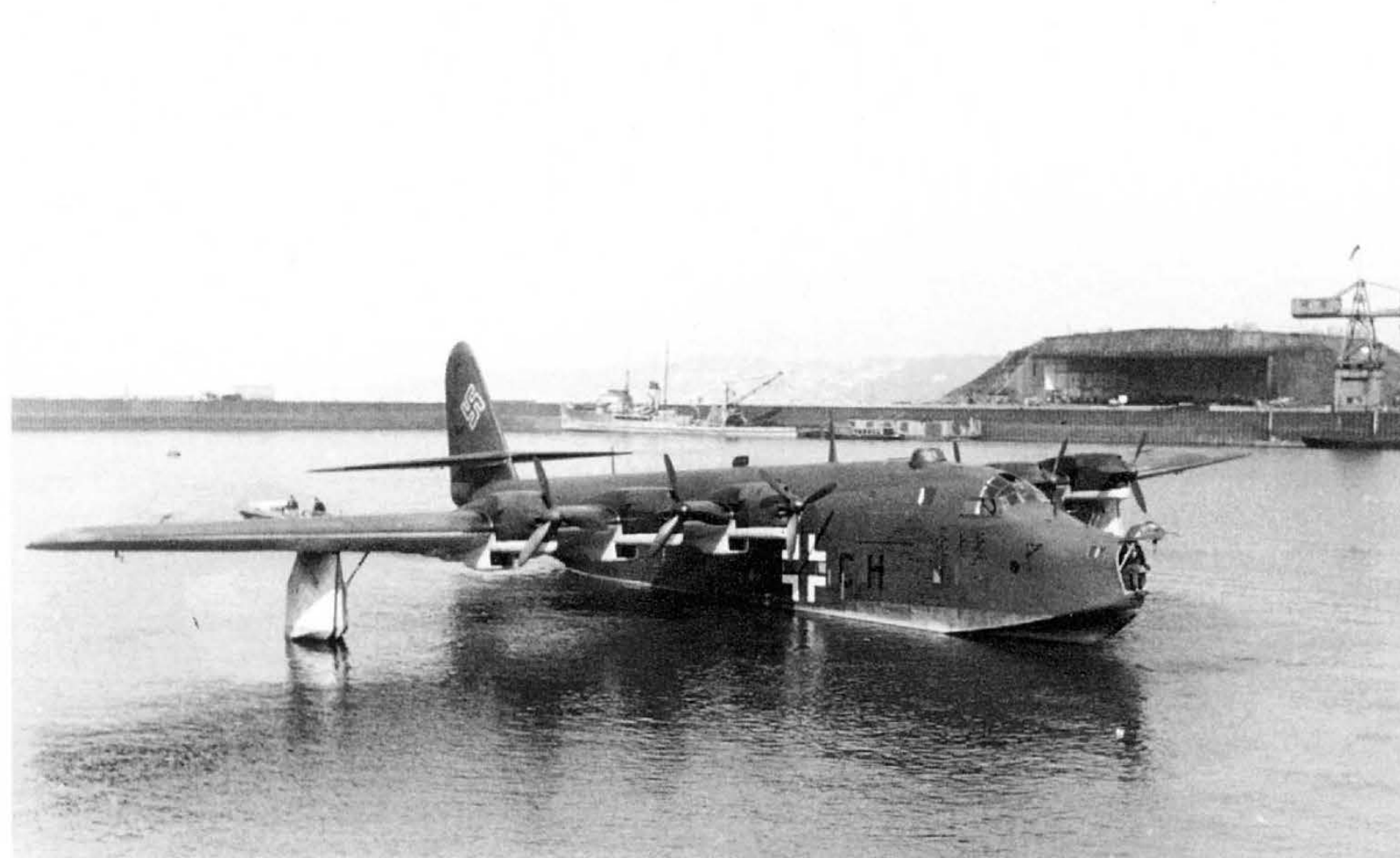
**113:** One of only two known photos which show marine aircraft wearing KG 200's 'A3' code, this Heinkel He 115, A3+DE, was found abandoned at Schleswig in Germany in May 1945. KG 200 only ever had three such machines officially on strength. It can be seen that it has received a number of modifications, including a large cut-out in the fuselage belly and solid panels to the canopy centre section. The nondescript finish is entirely typical of KG 200's aircraft. Interestingly, those He 115s which found their way into clandestine RAF service were also heavily modified



**114:** Although not believed to be one of the actual Do 24s which formed part of the AKTION 24 operation, this picture gives a good idea of how the last such aircraft probably looked at the time of its final flight to Guldborg, Denmark. The turrets have been removed and large Red Crosses applied



**115:** Despite rumours that KG 200 made use of the BV 222 (this example is the BV 222C-07, W.Nr. 007, X4+CH in 1943) there is no evidence for such claims. It is, however, quite possible that tentative plans were made for KG 200 crews to use the flying boats to carry escaping Nazi leaders to distant locations. Despite the BV 222's formidable range, the main task of KG 200 was agent-dropping behind enemy lines on the ground — and a flying boat would simply have been too large and unwieldy for the task — and difficult to exit from in flight







## 1942-1945 MISTLETOE Beethoven and Eisenhammer

In 1937, Short Brothers of Rochester, Kent, built a composite aircraft to test the theories of Major R.H. Mayo, coupling two airframes together for ultra-long-range flights. The Short-Mayo Composite, as the combination was called, comprised an S.21 lower and S.20 upper component. The S.21 was a shoulder-wing monoplane derived from the Short Empire flying boat, powered by four 920 hp Bristol Pegasus XC radials, while the S.20 was a mid-wing monoplane with twin floats powered by four 340 hp Napier Rapier V engines.

The combination made its first flight on 4 January 1938, the first separation taking place early in February. The most successful flight was on 6 October 1938 when Captain D.C.T. Bennett (later of RAF 'Pathfinders' fame) flew a distance of 6,045 miles non-stop, breaking the world long-distance record for seaplanes.

During the mid and late 'thirties, national prestige was echoed in the continuous attempts to improve on aviation records of distance, speed and altitude.

The success of the Short-Mayo Composite did not go unnoticed abroad, particularly in Germany. *Flugkapitän* Siegfried Holzbauer, a Junkers test pilot, displayed especial interest in the machine, but his plea for the construc-

tion of an indigenous composite was promptly rejected by the German Air Ministry.

In 1942, Fritz Stammer of the DFS, the German national sailplane and gliding research institute, began a series of trials with various combination aircraft including the Focke-Wulf Fw 56/DFS 230, Klemm Kl 35/DFS 230 and a Bf 109E/DFS 230. The success of these trials led to the appearance of the 'Beethoven-Gerät', mainly at the instigation of Siegfried Holzbauer. The Ministry's Technical Department asked Junkers to co-operate in the construction of a composite aircraft to be used for attacking heavily armoured targets, the explosive-filled pilotless lower component to be jettisoned in a shallow dive on the target, the upper portion returning to base in the normal way.

In 1943 work began on this prototype 'Beethoven-Gerät' (also nicknamed 'Vater und Sohn' — Father and

**116 Above:** This Mistel 2 combination was found abandoned at Merseburg in May 1945. The Ju 88G-1 bore Werk Nummer 590153, the Fw 190A-8 carried the number '97' on the rudder. Its W.Nr. is not known. It can be seen that the Ju 88 is in night camouflage with mid-war national markings while the Fw 190 is finished in accordance with late-war instructions, the undersides being left unpainted, and has late-war simplified crosses



Son — after a popular cartoon series by Eric Ohser) composite conversion, using a Junkers Ju 88A-4 bomber as the lower component. A Messerschmitt Bf 109F fighter was mounted above the bomber by means of two tripod-like series of struts attached to the Ju 88's main spars just behind the cockpit. The tail of the fighter was supported by a yoke above the rear fuselage on a single strut which, when released, sprang back to be caught by another yoke above the rear fuselage of the bomber. This then triggered an electrical contact which released the bomber from its upper component. The proposal was accepted by the RLM early in 1943 and one, later 15, prototypes were ordered. The order for 15 aircraft was placed in July 1943 and the first prototype, apparently now named 'Mistel' (Mistletoe) in great secrecy, made its first flight from Peenemünde in March 1944. While the combination was not easy to handle on take-off, perhaps surprisingly to those anxiously attending the trials, it displayed no particularly awkward handling characteristics in the air.

Her misplaced devotion to Hitler and the Nazi cause may be a cause of regret but the technical abilities of *Flugkapitän* Hanna Reitsch, as well as her physical bravery and her determination to gain support for any scheme or proposal that could be advantageous to Germany, must be recognised; this in the face of the hide-bound military correctness of the Luftwaffe as it had developed under the leadership of *Feldmarschall* Hermann Göring, who initially had command of the finest and best-equipped air force in the world. It is hardly surprising, therefore, to find that while pressing the case for development of Lange's glide-bomb, she also took a close interest in the other secret weapons that showed a prospect of success, such as Beethoven-Gerät which was to become Mistel. This project, well under development, offered none of the moral disagreement that divided the OKL when the Totaleinsatz was part of the plan. Some senior officers considered that the two schemes — for an unmanned powered bomb and for a piloted weapon — could somehow be combined, but the SO men would have no such compromise, even if it were possible.

On account of the inefficiency and possibly covert resistance of the OKL, Lange's project was not yet operable when the Mistel was first ready for action. There was no 'secret weapon' here — the Mistel was known (rather ponderously) to British Air Ministry Intelligence as the 'expendable composite aircraft'.

This and a third new weapons system (neither the last nor the least) were made the responsibility of *Oberst* Heigl. This third weapon was the clever but cumbersome 'Koch-Gerät' involving the use of the 'Water-Gotha' devised by *Maj* Adolf Koch RK, another admired leader of the Fallschirmjäger. Development, a 'stop-start' procedure, was in the hands of *Obli* Otto Kempke, by the 1. Staffel of *Hptm* Hans Jungwirth's 'Transportkolonne XI-OST' of paratroops, a part of 2. Versuchsverband ObdL. That formation was transferred from Oranienburg to Wildpark-Werder near Potsdam. Here it was near to 'Kurfürst', the rear echelon of the OKL whose operational staff went under the cover-name 'Robinson'.

On 10 October 1944 a Staffel of the IV./KG 101 became the nucleus of an Einsatz-Gruppe III./KG 66 established solely for Mistel operations but before any operations began the Gruppe became the II./KG 200. Despite the lack of support for the Totaleinsatz, the OKL had agreed with the Stab/KG 200 that available Mistel composites should be reserved for one decisive blow. Consequently, from several plans put forward, that nearest to Lange's original proposals was selected, namely an attack on the British Home Fleet in Scapa Flow to take place in December 1944, given the cover-name 'DRACHENHÖHLE' (Dragon's Lair). The plan otherwise had no similarity, with less likelihood of a speedy surprise approach and uncertainty as to the accuracy of the explosive component after release by the pilot even though the targets would be clearly exposed by flares dropped by aircraft of the 5./KG 200, a *Beleuchter* (Illuminator) Staffel training for just such an operation. No matter how well the pilots were trained, a successful 60 per cent 'hit' rate was all that could be expected.

On 16 April 1944, the Operations Staff of the Luftwaffe completed its top-secret paper *The Operational Possibilities of the Mistel*. In the paper three major fleet anchorages were considered for the attack: Gibraltar, Leningrad and Scapa Flow. Of these Gibraltar was the most difficult, for the target was 1,368 km from the nearest German base in France; at this extreme range the pilot would have to crash-land in Spain after the mission for there would be no fuel left to get him back to France. Even accepting the need for a one-way trip, the distance was so great that the attack was not feasible unless the aircraft could cross Spanish territory to get to the target; however, as the plan stated: "...the Führer has always refused to give his permission for this". Leningrad was ruled out because of the difficulties of achieving a measure of surprise so vital for a successful attack; and in any case, the Russian ships there were effectively bottled up in the Baltic. That left Scapa Flow.

The airfield at Grove in central Denmark was selected as being the most suitable for the attack on Scapa Flow, 772 km away. The paper warned:

"In the target area the very strongest of defences may be expected. Exactly how strong is not known, for our radio monitoring service is not effective north of the Wash. However, Department Ic estimates that on the airfields between the Firth of Forth and the north of Scotland there are about 160 to 200 aircraft of the types Spitfire, Hurricane, Mosquito and Beaufighter. In addition, there is a belt of radar stations giving gap-free cover out to sea....".

A fighter escort over the target was out of the question since the nearest Luftwaffe airfield to Scapa, at Stavanger in Norway, was some 563 km away. Because of the difficulties of take-off and aiming the Mistel in face of strong defences, a night or bad weather attack was judged to be "impossible" so the strike was planned for dusk.

The only hope for a successful attack was if the element of surprise could be exploited. The German pilots were to cross the North Sea flying as low as they could,



but certainly below 600 feet, so as to keep below the cover of the British radar sets for as long as possible. At the last moment they were to climb to about 3,000 feet, then go straight into their attack runs.

There were two essential pre-requisites for such a straight-in attack: reliable intelligence on the position of the target ships and very accurate navigation. The paper stressed the need for the most careful reconnaissance prior to the attack. The Mistel pilots would have no time to orbit Scapa Flow while they sought out their targets, each man would have an aerial photograph of the exact position of his own target marked on it. To assist the pilots to navigate accurately, a series of 'Funkboje Schwan' — 'swan radio buoys' — was to be laid out across the North Sea immediately before the attack. These buoys were shaped like ordinary bombs, dropped into the sea from aircraft and, floating on the surface, emitted radio signals on which the aircraft could home. For an aircraft flying at 183 m the Swan radio beacon had a range of about 96 km; so during their approach flights the Mistel pilots were to 'beacon crawl' across the North Sea to Scapa Flow.

One can only speculate on how successful the planned Mistletoe attack on Scapa Flow might have been, always assuming that the unwieldy combinations would have been able to avoid the defences. The capital ships of the Home Fleet were continuously coming and going, and the number at the anchorage varied a great deal during the summer of 1944. During June and July for example, the fleet aircraft carriers *Victorious*, *Indomitable*, *Implacable*, *Indefatigable*, *Formidable* and *Furious* all put in an appearance at Scapa Flow, as did the battleships *Duke of York* and *Howe*. So had the attack been launched at a time when the anchorage was full, there would have been targets in plenty.

Even partially successful attacks so near to home would undoubtedly have been a further blow to service and civilian morale which, so the British Government rather shakily claimed, was already hard-hit by the bombardment of Southern England and the capital by the 'Retaliation Weapons', the V-I flying bomb and the far more terrifying V-2 rocket.

A rather different picture may be evident from the gloomy forebodings of civil servants if one compares the situation at the far side of the world. There the US Pacific Fleet Fast Carrier Force had to undergo heavy losses from October 1944 until July 1945. Task Force 38/58 lost 34 warships sunk and 368 damaged by huge formations of Japanese aircraft, the *Kamikaze* (Divine Wind Special Attack Units) of the Imperial Japanese Navy and the similar *Shimbu-tai* units of the Army. Two American fleet carriers were sunk and eight carriers of various classes were withdrawn from service as no longer operational. For these quite remarkable successes and a severe blow to the morale of the US Navy, 1,465 Japanese pilots were killed in the period April-June 1945. The gap in the carrier force was filled by the fleet carriers of the British Pacific Fleet, whose armoured decks could withstand even direct hits. So, we may assume that British morale may

have been rather less delicate than official reports suggested. Admittedly, the British civilians and servicemen were in close proximity and secrets could not be kept for long, whereas the US servicemen were thousands of miles from home, yet the American press was more free to report disaster than that of the United Kingdom, where all news was censored and 'filtered' by the Ministry of Information to prevent any leaks of useful knowledge to the enemy's Intelligence.

It was obvious to those wise men at OKL who watched the changing fortunes of war that it was far too late; perhaps 18 months too late, for *Oblt* Lange's SO men to make any truly effective attack which might influence the policies of the Western Allies.

A number of Lange's original SO men were moved to Pilsen where they awaited orders. They were contacted when a new Soviet offensive was clearly about to start and 13 of them were taken by road to Jüterborg Altes-Lager. On arrival, they were individually (and cynically) greeted by *Gen-Maj* Fuchs who outlined the mission required of them. He explained that it was vital at this time to destroy all bridges across the Oder, halting the Russian advance and cutting off the special units in the Red Army's bridgeheads. He regretted that only one Fw 190 of the type on which the pilots had received training was available but he hoped that crews with knowledge of other aircraft would volunteer for this "most important" mission. We are told that pilots of He 111s and Ju 88s spontaneously volunteered.

The first wave of aircraft took off on 17 April 1945, among them the Fw 190 piloted by Ernst Beichel, an SO man from Lange's original *Totaleinsatz* group, to attack the bridges on 18 April. Beichel crashed his machine on a Red Army pontoon bridge near Sellin, which he destroyed. The following day a second wave of SO attacks on Oder bridges was carried out "moments before the first Russian tanks appeared." As one of the SO men later wrote:

"The pilots crashed their aircraft on targets knowing that, only by paying with their own lives, would they be able to destroy the bridges. Militarily these missions were foolish — the destroyed or damaged bridges were, as reconnaissance showed, replaced or repaired within a very short time. The Soviet offensive against Berlin suffered no effects."

As one who was a sapper in a Field Company of the Royal Engineers, the author can confirm that while damage to steel or timber-truss bridges of single-span can seriously delay support and armoured vehicles, folding-boat and pontoon bridges, although easily damaged, can be quickly repaired provided adequate engineers' stores are brought up in reserve. What a waste of lives in the way feared by *Oblt* Lange when he set up his 'Leonidas Staffel'.

OVERLORD offered the great opportunity foreseen by Lange — a slow-moving fleet of major warships in relatively restricted sea areas. But Lange's glide-bomb was not ready, nor his pilots yet trained.

In May 1944 a unit designated the 2./KG 101 was formed under the command of *Hptm* Horst Rudat to test



the first Mistel Bf 109F-4/Ju 88A-4 combinations and five pilots were given instructor training by Holzbauer and *Flugkapitän* Horst Lux at Junkers' airfield at Nordhausen. Trials were begun by Rudat against the island of Moen, then he set up a base at Kolberg on the Baltic shore, with five Mistel combinations. The nearest to an attempt to carry out Lange's plan was to be made with these unsuitable aircraft which after the Invasion were moved to St. Dizier in northern France. From there, led by Rudat, they made their attack on the night of 24/25 June against shipping in the Baie de la Seine. The first sortie was made by Fw Saalfeld but he had control difficulties and jettisoned the Ju 88. Was this, perhaps, the occasion of the 'incident', date uncertain, at Park Gate, Sarisbury, near Farcham, Hampshire, which was described to Civil Defence authorities first as an aircraft crash and then as a bomb? The public and some local officials were kept away from the damage by service police.

The Mistel pilots did claim some hits, but none of these is confirmed in the Allied records. An explanation for this could be that some of the hits were on the old French battleship, *Courbet*, which was being used as a blockship for the British 'Mulberry' harbour at Courseulles. Since the ship was already lying at the sea bottom, in shallow water, the Royal Navy were more than happy to have the Germans attack her in preference to more worthwhile targets. So *Courbet* was dressed up to look as conspicuous as possible, with an enormous tricolour with the cross of Lorraine; thereafter she acted as a magnet for attacks. She certainly collected several bombs and torpedoes, and possibly a Mistel or two. The results were supposedly concealed by a smokescreen, a waste of machines and effort when rewarding targets were nearby. On 10 August another attack on shipping in the English Channel met even less success. One Ju 88 component flew as far as Binley near Andover before it crashed and exploded.

The original cover name 'Mistletoe' for the composite aircraft programme was supplemented by the name 'Beethoven' for the Fw 190/Ju 88 combination, possibly related to the late-war habit of the Luftwaffe of giving its aircraft names, such as *Rächer* — Avenger — for the Ju 188. But Beethoven? Perhaps it simply reflected the atmosphere of confusion which prevailed within the Luftwaffe at that time.

By the end of August the first preparations for DRACHENHÖHLE were underway with Ju 88s being converted and concentrated at Grove in Denmark. Development of the Mistel concept continued with a series of variants:

Mistel 1	Ju 88A-4/Bf 109F-4
Mistel 2	Ju 88G-1/Fw 190F-8
Mistel 3A	Ju88A-4/Fw 190A-8
Mistel 3B	Ju 88H-4/Fw 190A-8
Mistel 3C	Ju 88G-10/Fw 190F-8

For the present, those made ready for operations were:

Mistel 1: cruising speed 300 km/h (about 185 mph) take-off weight 16,000kg.

Mistel 2: max speed 550 km/h (342 mph) cruising speed 320 km/h at 0 m and 340 km/h at 4,000 m. Range

2,200 km with 5,000 ltr of fuel at take-off weight of 17,500 kg. Max range 3,800 km with 7,400 ltr fuel and no less than 22,000 kg weight.

The Mistel warhead comprised a 3,500 kg load of which some 1,700 kg was actually explosive. The warhead was of the hollow charge type. A fine jet of molten metal squirted at 20/25 times the speed of sound into the target, theoretical penetration of armour being over seven metres. The whole action of the hollow charge took 1/10,000 of a second. The warhead was not fitted until the last possible moment; it needed six mechanics, two armourers, a four-ton crane and took a day.

There was a pause in the operational build-up while, on 26/27 September, Mistel unsuccessfully attacked the Rhine bridge at Nijmegen in Holland. Then a catastrophe in October — five aircraft took off in bad weather but three crashed into hillsides and the remaining two were unable to locate their assigned targets, so jettisoned their Ju 88s. It was impossible to land a Mistel when fitted with a warhead. This fiasco seemingly persuaded the OKL to stop wasting the weapon piecemeal and to conserve it for the decisive DRACHENHÖHLE operation.

The 'Mistel-Gruppe' was yet again re-numbered, this time as the II./KG 200 on 10 November. It now incorporated three Staffeln — the 5.(Bel)/KG 200 with Ju 88 and Ju 188; the 6./KG 200 (operational Staffel under *Oblt* Walter Pitz RK) with the Mistel 1 and 3, and the 7.(Erg)/KG 200 with Ju 88, Mistel 1 and Mistel 2.

*Maj* Horst Beeger from the Stab of KG 200 was flown to Stavanger at Christmas. On 12 January 1945 he planned for DRACHENHÖHLE to be mounted on the 20th. There were 15 Mistel units of the II./KG 200 to start from Tirstrup, 12 Ju 88/188 as 'illuminators' and 15-18 Fw 190 (BT) from Stavanger-Sola. Weather conditions, particularly snow, set back the start so that Baumbach flew to see Göring to ask for further delays. After some deliberation and changes of mind, Göring decided on 14 February that DRACHENHÖHLE was no longer feasible. The plan was replaced by that for attacks on the Soviet power and aircraft industries, to be known as EISENHAMMER (Iron Hammer). Before all the aircraft could be moved, three were destroyed in their dispersal pens by British long-range fighters.

On 11 November, Lancasters attacked the German battleship *Tirpitz* with 12,000 lb Tallboy bombs, and caused her to capsize. With *Tirpitz* out of the way there was no call for battleships or fleet aircraft carriers to be held in the Atlantic, and within weeks those which had served with the Home Fleet at Scapa Flow were on their way to the Pacific. So before Operation DRACHENHÖHLE could be put into effect all the worthwhile targets had left Scapa Flow. The combinations would have to be used elsewhere.

The only German unit flying regularly over Russia at this time was the I./KG 200 their aircraft carrying radar observers, and they found there was little radar defence of that country. Modified Mistel composites with a range of 1,223 km were prepared with drop tanks under the FW 190 upper components and warhead tests were car-





**117:** Access for the pilots of the upper component of the Mistel involved a long ladder, seen propped against the wing root of this live Ju 88/Fw 190 combination, seen at Burg in early 1945, shortly before an unsuccessful mission against Antwerp. The pilots, all from 6./KG 200, are from left: Fws Rudi Riedl, Willi Döhring and Emil Degering. Note the unusual white(?) blotches on the Ju 88



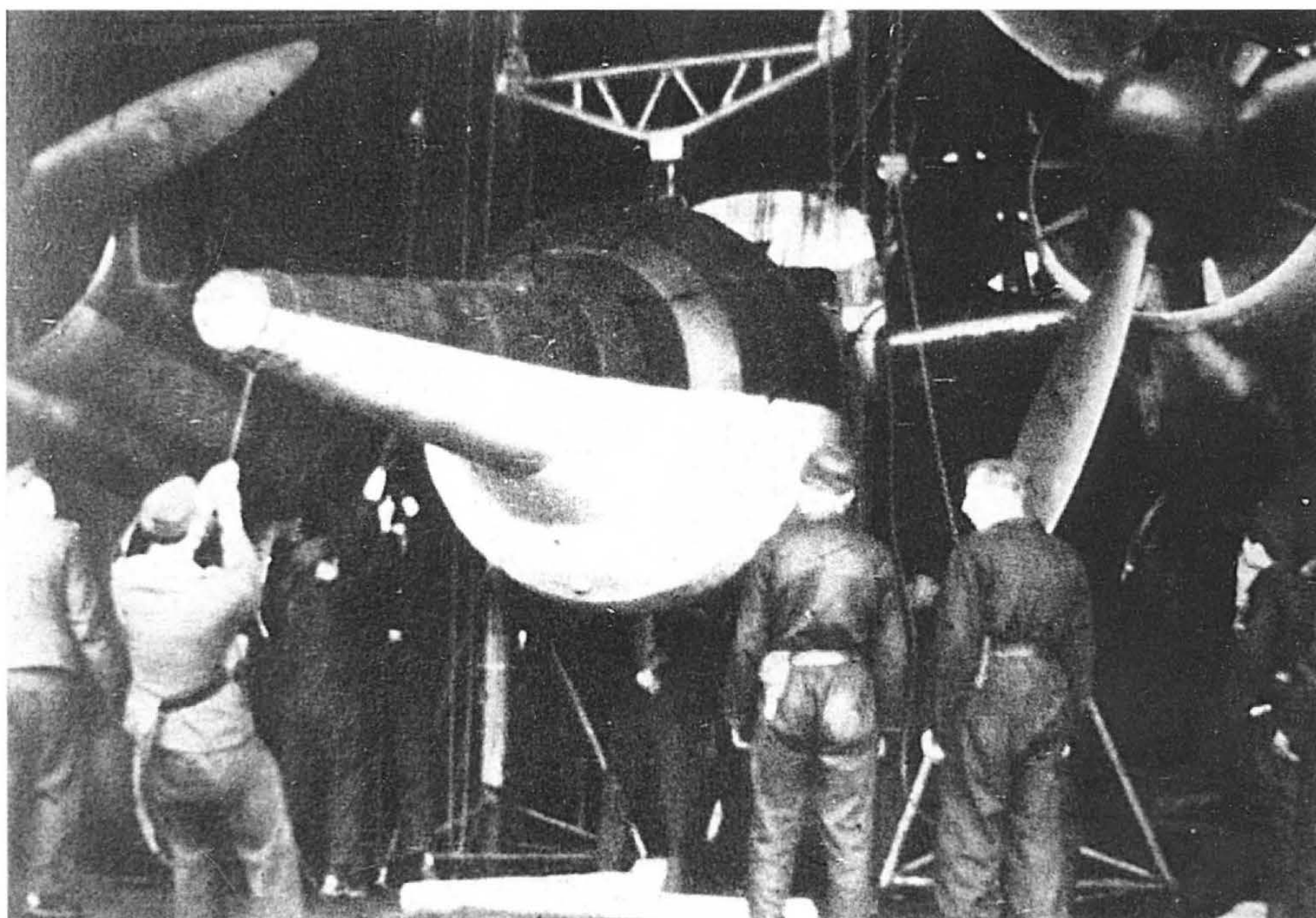
**118:** A Mistel 2 combination of Ju 88G-1 W.Nr. 590153 and Fw 190A-8 '97' at Merseburg at the end of the war. Just getting into the Fw 190 was an effort using the rather precarious ladder seen propped against the starboard wing. The Ju 88 was apparently once in service with NJG 5, whose 'C9' code was still faintly visible on the fuselage



**119:** Surrounded by curious sightseers, this Mistel 2 combination of 6./KG 200 was pictured at Tirstrup, Denmark, in June 1945. Several Mistel found here had been simply abandoned after DRACHENHÖHLE had been called off. The Ju 88A-4, which carried the tactical number 'Red 13' on its rudder, was probably W.Nr. 144032. It had been built in early 1943 and may have served with KG 30. By that time it was probably very war-weary so using it as a Mistel made good sense



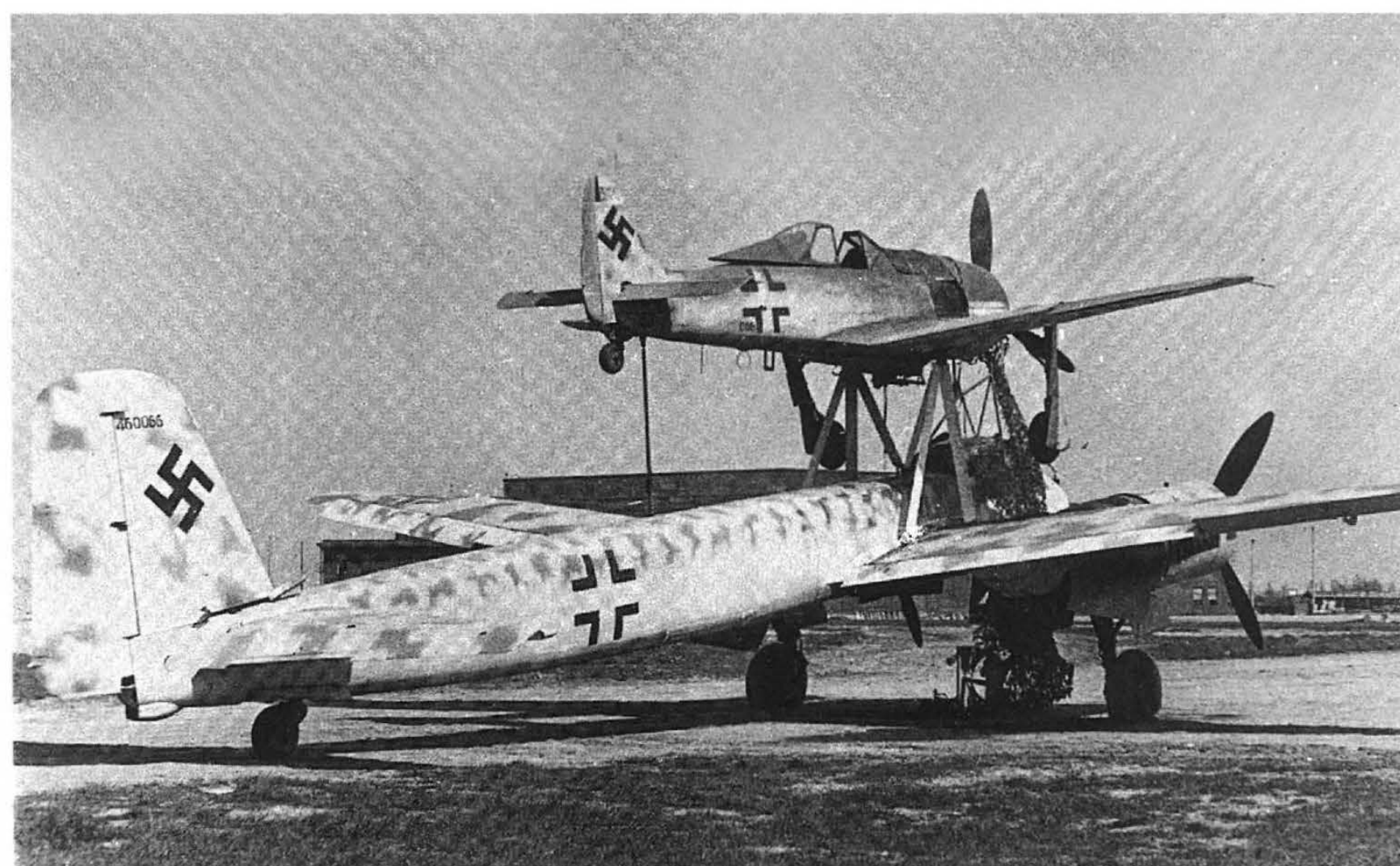
**120:** Technicians carefully attaching the massive 1,700 kg hollow-charge explosive warhead to the Ju 88A lower component of a Mistel. The projecting 1.8m long impact fuse was colloquially known as the 'elephant's trunk'. Note the brilliance of the underside colour to the war-head, probably newly-applied RLM 76



**121:** This line-up of Mistel 1 combinations was allegedly taken at Burg, late in 1944 shortly before a mission. But who are the civilians in the picture, one of whom appears to be a woman? It seems more likely that the picture was taken post-war, possibly at St Dizier in France, which would mean that the aircraft were originally part of KG 101



**122:** This captured Mistel 3 combination made use of Fw 190A-8 W.Nr. 961243 and Ju 88G-10 W.Nr. 460066. These long-fuselage versions of the Ju 88 had been intended as long-range 'destroyers' but in the event as they were only completed late in 1944, it seems most were converted to Mistel use. Part of the Ju 88's W.Nr. can be seen repeated on the Fw 190's fuselage. Both aircraft appear to be virtually brand new. Bernburg, April 1945





ried out at Detfeld, two of the missiles being needed to destroy small power stations, six to destroy larger. The original plan was to fly from airfields in East Prussia, but later Oranienburg, Parchim, Lartz, Marienche and Peenemünde had to be substituted.

The idea of the knock-out blow was revived in December 1944, when the plan was expanded in scope and re-scheduled for the spring of 1945 this time using the Mistletoe combinations.

## EISENHAMMER

On 9 November 1943 an unusual report named *Studie; Kampf gegen die Russische Rustungs-Industrie* (Plan for an attack on the Russian Armaments Industry) by the Luftwaffe Operations Staff adversely criticised the Air Force. It began: "This is essentially a critical survey of the strategy of the German Luftwaffe, together with a plan to divert at least part of the air force from its original mission of direct support of ground forces to a well-coordinated attack on the USSR's armaments industry". Details of the plan followed in great detail. The report discounted previous plans to attack the Russian electricity supply industry. At the time the US 8th Bomber Command was concentrating its efforts to destroy the German armaments industry and, to some extent, succeeding, although incurring heavy losses of aircraft particularly as they headed for England under constant attack by German fighters. The OKL realised that any such attacks by the Luftwaffe against Soviet armaments factories would leave their bombers open to similar attack on the return journey, necessarily long since the Soviets had relocated many factories at great distances from the German bases.

Nonetheless, the Operations Staff prepared a highly detailed plan for an attack on the Russian arms industry under the cover-name EISENHAMMER (Iron Hammer). Several writers have made much of this plan, mainly perhaps because there is so much material in existence. When the offensive strength of the Luftwaffe was temporarily unused, annihilation raids were launched against the nearer factories at Voronezh, Saratov and Grozny in the summer of 1943, with numerous assaults on Leningrad, with good results. Because the German air bases were continually being pushed back, some of the larger targets of enemy armament were beyond the range of the Luftwaffe bombers in service. It was evident that the most favourable opportunities for attack had been missed. The report assumed a staggeringly high increase in the number of combat aircraft available to the Soviets by January 1944, listing 19 airframe plants and seven aircraft engine plants.

Although it was seen that destruction of the electric power supply would bring the most lasting results, it was suggested that six Gruppen of He 111 and Do 217 (including the III./KG 200) and two Gruppen of Ju 88s would suffice to damage the supply industry by 50 per cent. For attacks on the aircraft industry no firm proposals were made but it was assumed that these would take place at the same time as the strikes against the power supply,

using the He 177 and Ju 290, this aircraft having the greatest range of all the bombers.

For some time Professor Dr Steinmann, advisor to the RLM, had still insisted that air attacks should be made against the power industry. At the end of October 1944 he negotiated through Goebbels to obtain 100 cbm of motor transport fuel which Göring agreed to exchange for aviation spirit — this in itself shows the degree of difficulty experienced by KG 200 in obtaining assistance — to enable 16 He 177s under command of the II./KG 200 to attack power plants at Wolkovstroy, Lake Ladoga, the Volga Lake dam and Uglitsch. The Stab II. Gruppe, however, estimated that 250 cbm of fuel would be needed for flight training and engine testing. Meanwhile Prof. Steinmann developed a special bomb for use against dams named the 'Sommerballon — Summer Balloon', a device similar to the 'bouncing bomb' invented by Barnes-Wallis for use by the RAF against the Ruhr dams. This, he proposed, would supplement the use of the Mistel aircraft.

The suggested attack by Luftflotte 6 would be carried out in a moonlight period in winter at dawn. KG 200 would receive verbal orders. The aircraft for use against power plants in the Moscow-Upper Volga region would be Mistel 2 and 3, 100 being completed by February 1945, and the BM 1000F (the Sommer Ballon) where the ice remained on the surface of the dams of the hydro-electric plants. Besides a flare-dropping (Beleuchter) Staffel further flare-dropping units were to be attached to KG 200, as were additional He 177s and their crews. Ultimately EISENHAMMER, delayed by atrocious weather, was abandoned because of insufficient fuel to ensure that operational range requirements could be met.



**123:** Members of 5. and 6./KG 200 discuss the proposed Mistel mission against the docks at Antwerp against a backdrop of Ju 88G-1 W.Nr. 714652. Talking (with back to camera) to a Kriegsmarine liaison officer is Oblt Herbert Pilz Staffelkapitän of 5.(Bel.)/KG 200. On extreme left is Hptm Kurt Capesius, Kommandeur of II./KG 200, next Fw Rudi Riedl, fourth is Oblt Balduin Pauli, Staffelkapitän of 6./KG 200



**124:** A starboard side view of the same Mistel 2 combination as seen in photo 118. The Fw 190 carries an illegible Werk Nummer on its fin, while the Ju 88 appears to be finished with an additional overspray of 82 or 83 over its nightfighter finish



**125 Below:** Another Mistel 2 combination found abandoned at Gardelegen in May 1945. The Fw 190 is probably an A-8 model, the Ju 88 is a G. Both appear to be in the late-war finish with unpainted undersides







## OSTTRUPPEN

### The betrayed

During the 1930s the Nazis gave support and protection to refugees from the devastation and famine of Stalin's oppression in the Ukraine. In Germany the emigrés set up a *Ukrainska Povstanchieska Armiya* (Ukrainian Insurgent Army) with official approval. Several hundred of these Ukrainians were encouraged to join the SS, despite its 'Aryan' requirement for entry. It was planned to place these people in positions of authority following the inevitable invasion of the Soviet Union.

After the first successes of BARBAROSSA, the Germans recruited tens of thousands of Ukrainians into a 'Ukrainian Freedom Legion', to serve in construction and transport units in support of the Wehrmacht. By the end of 1941 there were some 200,000 men in the Ukrainian brigades. Russian prisoners of war and civilians were also persuaded or coerced into becoming auxiliary troops — within a few days 15,000 Red Army soldiers deserted in response to 'Silberstreif' (Silver Streak), the dropping of millions of leaflets behind the Soviet lines. In Heeresgruppe Mitte (Army Group Centre) the heavy losses of late 1941 were partly offset by drafting these *Hilfswillige* or 'Hiwi' 'auxiliary volunteers' into combatant units with German officers.

Espionage and other clandestine operations had been entirely the preserve of *Adm* Canaris's Abwehr until the formation in February 1942 of 'Zeppelin' *Sonderkommandos* (special detachments) by *SS-Standartenführer* Reinhard Heydrich's *Sicherheitsdienst* Amt VI, the department of Himmler's RSHA which controlled also

the Gestapo and Kripo, the secret and criminal police forces. The 'Zeppelin' units reported to *SS-Sturmbannführer* Dr Hengelhaupt and, through him, to the RSHA and the Oberkommando der Wehrmacht.

In March 1942, *Oberst* Reinhard Gehlen became head of *Fremde Heere Ost* section of the military intelligence department of the OKW, which was gradually taking precedence as an intelligence-gathering agency over the Abwehr.

The Abwehr had set up 'Frontaufklärungskommandos' for reconnaissance and sabotage behind the Russian lines, their headquarters cover named 'Walli I', 'II' and 'III', the last operating detachments of troops in Red Army uniforms in order to confuse Soviet Army and partisan units.

Hitler's acceptance in principle of allowing 'Ostvolk' or 'Eastern People' to wear German uniforms was taken up by the Wehrmacht and Waffen SS to allow the formation of 'ethnic legions' to serve as coastal defence units or for garrison duties by which means they could keep the civilian population of occupied countries in check. It may be unpopular in these days of racial equality to suggest that the Russian Ukrainian and Galician *Osttruppen* of Christian belief were less feared than the true 'Turkic' Moslem troops from the south-east, from Azerbaijan and

**126 Above:** A rare photograph of German agents shortly before they changed into native garb preparatory to a parachute drop into enemy territory from an aircraft of 2. Versuchverband Ob.d.L. or 1./KG 200. Several appear to be of Turkic or non-German origin



Turkestan, who were used without care or compassion against small civilian communities in France 'pour encourager les autres'.

In September 1942, *Feldmarschall* Ewald von Kleist, whose part of Heeresgruppe B headed the southward thrust towards the Caucasus and the Baku oilfields, wrote of the wide, empty lands east of the Black Sea:

"These vast spaces depress me. And the vast horde of people! We are lost if we don't win them over."

What, indeed, to do with these non-German Ostvolk?, regarded under the racial policy of the Nazis as sub-human. Many were simply recruited to provide those same Nazis with ready-made armies to fight Stalin's regime i.e. the Red Army with its multi-racial background and content.

Gehlen reorganised *Fremde Heere Ost* and agreed with Heydrich and Canaris their respective fields of activity. Gehlen's teams of interrogators began working in the camps where Ukrainians, Cossacks, Georgians, Tartars and prisoners of other races were held. From these people, *Fremdevolkischen* (foreign peoples) units were formed, later to be expanded into 'Ethnic Legions' mainly employed against partisans in the hinterland of the German rear areas in the East. Gehlen soon took over the running of the *Abwehr* 'Walli' units and established at Wulfheide a centre for training Red Army officers as agents, under the command of *Oberst* Alexis von Roenne, Head of the FHO Group III. From the flood of Soviet deserters and prisoners, thousands were recruited into *Hiwi* units. Proposals to form an army of Russians to fight against the Soviet armies were turned down by Hitler when he took over supreme command of the Wehrmacht on 19 December 1941, but this did not interfere with the OKW allowing the continuing formation of battalions of *Osttruppen*, this term later replacing the name *Hilfswillige*.

Red Army General Andrei Andreyevitch Vlasov was taken prisoner after his Second Shock Army was annihilated on the Volkhov River in July 1942. When Stalin announced automatic sentence of death for treason of all Soviet prisoners in German hands, Vlasov and other senior officers were permitted by the *Oberkommando des Heeres* to form an organisation to fight alongside the Germans for the liberation of the Russian people from Soviet rule. Vlasov set up a Staff for the Russian Liberation Army (*Russkaya Osvoboditel'nyaya Armiya* — ROA) which he was told would be expanded to some 200,000 men under his command.

Although he was assured that the ROA would be required to fight alongside the Wehrmacht only to free the Russian people from oppression, this was a deception. Some 825,000 men of these largely Islamic Ostvolk were embodied. Samuel Mitcham, the American historian, has listed Karachoevs, Kabardines, Ossets, Ingushs, Azerbaijanis, Kalmuks, Uzbeks and Cossacks. Many were incorporated into the Army of Liberation under *Gen* Vlasov.

In November 1942 the Soviet counter-offensive began and during the next two months drove back the Ger-

man armies to the Don, leaving only Stalingrad as a German pocket behind the Russian lines.

When Hitler was persuaded that some *Ost-Legionnaires* on the Eastern Front had deserted to the partisans, on 10 October 1943 he ordered all *Osttruppen* to be transferred to the West. By this time there were 78 *Ostbataillone*, 122 separate *Kompanien* and numerous other units incorporated into the Wehrmacht, in all some half-million men. The *Ostbataillone*, including those already formed of the ROA, were to be exchanged for German battalions or attached to German regiments manning the static defences along the Channel Coast. Unwilling to lose a large part of its 'effective' manpower, by means of subterfuge the OKH retained many of the *Osttruppen* in the East. The transfer of units to France, Italy and Denmark was supposedly completed by 28 January 1944. During the spring a 'Special Employment' Divisional Staff 136 was established at Lyon to administer to the *Ostbataillone* in France, which were to be employed for operations against the various Resistance organisations combined into the *Forces Francaises de l'Interieur*. Author Antonio Munoz identified the units as formed from a 'Legionnaire Bataillon' of *Freiwilliger* from the Soviet Caucasus. In some places *Osttruppen* deserted and joined *maquisards* and in mid-May some 50 Cossacks made arrangements to desert to the Vercors, but their unit was transferred to the north of France. Allied Intelligence reported that Armenian troops planned, 'when the time was ripe', to turn their weapons against the German oppressor.

Meanwhile, *Oberkommando West* considered occupying the natural redoubt formed by the high plateau of the Vercors, south-west of Grenoble, where some 3,900 men of the FFI were assembled to threaten the rear of the German 19th Army stationed in the back country of Provence. The basic elements of an unfolding tragedy which was to involve KG 200 in probably its most controversial operation, albeit mostly in a ground role, were beginning to come together.





## RISING IN THE WEST

### Montagnards

As the sole ground operation of any size carried out by KG 200, the operation against the French resistance on the Vercors is worthy of closer study, as it involved combined air and ground forces.

In the Occupied Zone of France, there were three Heeresgebiete (Army Areas): Nordost, Nordwest and Sudwestfrankreich, in each of which an Oberfeldkommandantur (Regional Military Command) ensured control by the Militärbefehlshaber in Frankreich, *Gen. Oberst* Karl-Heinrich von Stulpnagel.

On 12 November 1942, after the Allied landings in North Africa, the Germans broke the terms of the Armistice Agreement with Petain's Vichy Government and, following a long-standing plan, 'Anton', moved their forces into key areas of the hitherto unoccupied 'Zone Libre' of France in operation ATILA. There, in December, a new Heeresgebiet-Sudfrankreich — Army Region of Southern France — commanded by *Gen. Lt* Niehoff, imposed the will of the Military Government on French industry and civil administration.

In December 1942, Pierre Dalloz, one-time editor of *La Montagne*, the periodical of the Club Alpin Français, proposed to Jean Moulin, *Gen* de Gaulle's emissary to the partisan groups in France, a plan to use the Vercors Plateau as a fortress. Following the eventual return of Allied armies to France, this redoubt might be held by irregular forces for four or five days, long enough for airborne troops to be set down to attack the enemy's lines of communication in the Rhone Valley.

The Vercors is the westernmost part of the Alpes du Dauphiné, south-west of Grenoble; a massif 50 km by 25 km bounded by the valleys of the rivers Isère, Drôme and Drac. This plateau is surrounded by sheer limestone cliffs and, on the eastern flank, by peaks up to 2,100 m, their slopes covered by the most extensive forests in western Europe.

The proposal was approved and cover-named MONTAGNARDS, the name of the democratic party in the 1791 Republican Assembly. The plan was (1) to use the plateau simply as a base for raids on enemy communications and as a hiding-place for the Resistance organisation Corps Francs, or (2) a more ambitious project to destroy roads into the Plateau and to establish peripheral defences within which large numbers of men and quantities of supplies could be dropped. Dalloz noted that "...the Vercors should be involved only at some previously arranged moment, preferably just before an Allied landing from the Mediterranean" and that landing zones on the Vercors "must at first provide for the parachutage of arms and above all, as J-Day draws near, the landing of airborne troops".

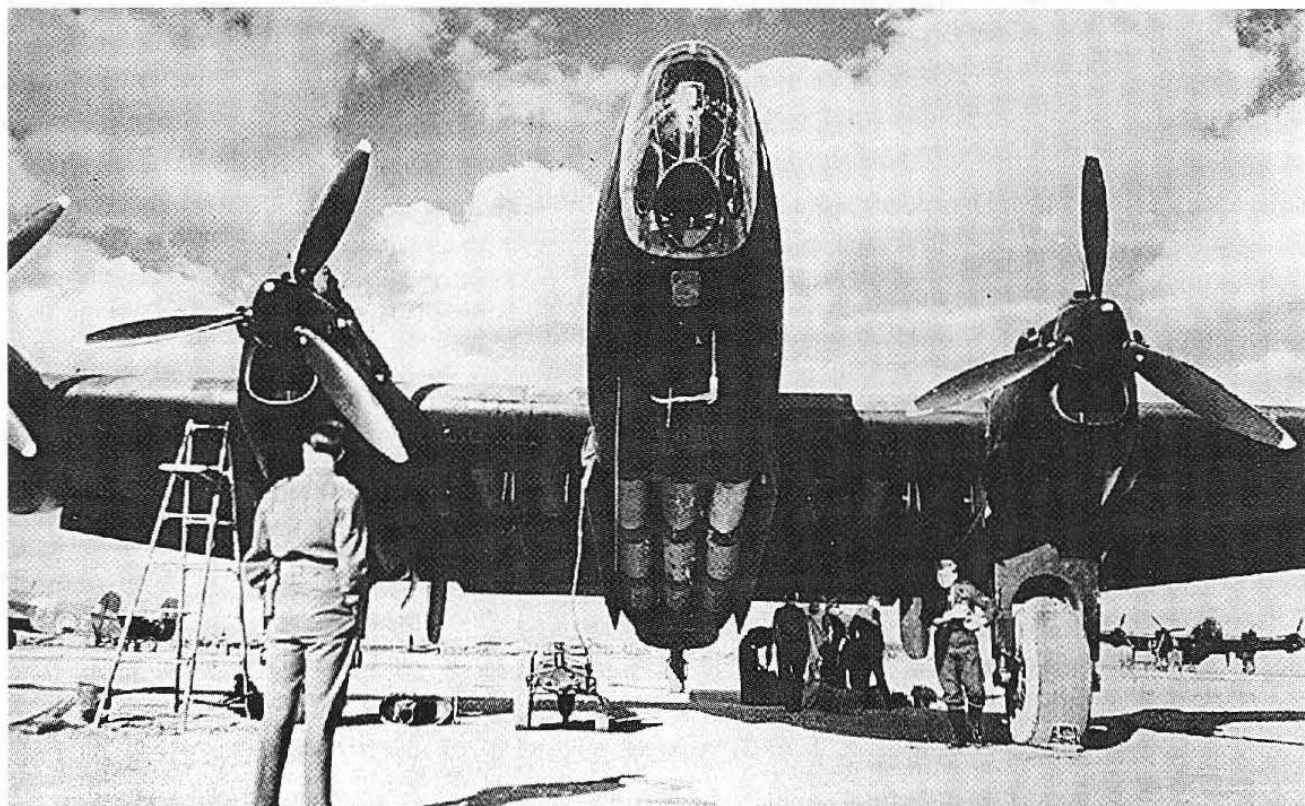
**127 Above:** A Reggiane Re 2002, BN+YB, Black 2, originally of the Italian Regia Aeronautica and taken over by Geschwader Bongart. It is shown here as it was found at Lyon-Bron in mid-1944 after withdrawal from central France. Most production Re 2002s were finished in overall dark green to Italian requirements which is probably still being carried, heavily weathered. A small W.Nr., 1136, can just be seen on the fin. This is almost certainly the manufacturer's construction number. The fuselage cross is non-standard.



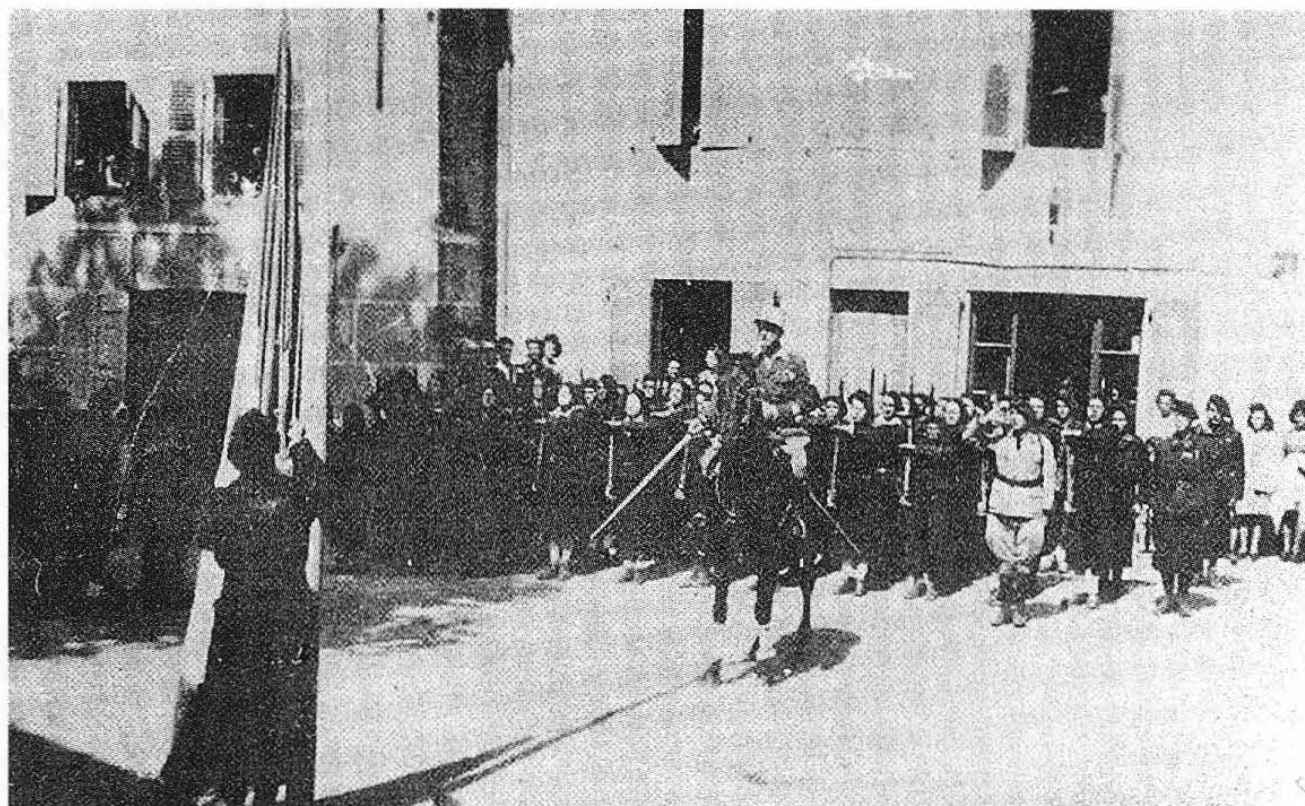
**128:** *Grenoble; the view to the southwest along the River Isere to the northern slopes of the Vercors plateau*



**129:** *A Merlin-engined RAF Halifax of 624 Squadron at Blida, its bomb-bays loaded with supply containers for a night drop into southern France*



**130:** *The French tricolour being raised during a ceremony by the FFI on 25 June 1944 at St. Martin-en-Vercors. The flag-raising was followed by a march past of many of the French resistance fighters, many of whom had been professional mountain troops*





Consent was obtained from de Gaulle's Bureau Central de Renseignements et d'Action (Central Office of Intelligence and Operations) and Allied HQ in London. After confirmation by the BBC Foreign Service on 25 February 1943: "Les montagnards doivent continuer à gravir les cimes" (The highlanders must keep on scaling the peaks), a Comité Clandestin du Vercors was formed to prepare for action. Sites for the reception of parachute drops were provisionally selected, near Villard-de-Lans in the north-east, in the Forêt de Lente in the west and near Vassieux-en-Vercors in the south; one, code-named 'Gabin', to be the landing ground for MONTAGNARDS.

At the beginning of 1943 the RSHA, dissatisfied with the lack of co-operation from the French police in seeking out dissident elements, set up units of SD (Security Service) and SP (Sicherheitspolizei — Security Police) throughout France. Petain's Government responded by forming a similar service, the Milice Française, and later detached the Groupes Mobiles de Reserve, motorised sections of the Police de Sécurité, to operate alongside the military wing of the Milice, the Franc-Gard, against the growing Resistance movement.

At Lyon a Kommando der Sipo und SD, or 'Einsatzkommando', (Operational Detachment) was established with a staff of SD officers and French agents. Commanded by SS *Obersturmführer* Dr Werner Knab, the KDS Lyon was to play a significant part against the Resistance. In south-eastern France all anti-partisan operations would be controlled by HVSt 590 which in June became Oberfeldkommandantur (Regional Military HQ) 590.

By 1943, there were maquisards already in camps on the Plateau, united to form a single Résistance du Vercors. Most of the camps had a cadre of trained soldiers, ex-mountain troops such as Chasseurs Alpins or Cuirassiers, officered by Armée Secrète and under strict military discipline.

The Resistance suffered two severe blows in June 1943, when Gen Delestraint, the head of De Gaulle's secret army in France, was arrested in Paris and Moulin was betrayed to the Gestapo. Chief of the KDS Lyon, SS *Obersturmführer* Klaus Barbié, later known as the 'Butcher of Lyon'.

The FFI (Forces Françaises de l'Intérieur i.e. Resistance) Military Delegate Region 1, Rhone-Alpes, was commanded by Col Henri Zeller; the Vercors commander was Cdt Huet and the civil administrator, Eugene Chavant, a founder of the Maquis. Their Staff feared that MONTAGNARDS would be abandoned after the loss of Moulin and Delestraint so Chavant was taken by submarine to Algiers, by this time the 'capital' of Free France. He returned on 7 June with a rather vague document signed by Jacques Soustelle, Secretary-General of the Comité d'Action en France, dated 30 May: "ADVICE. The policies set out in February 1943 by Gen V (Delestraint) for the organisation of the Vercors remain valid."

By the end of 1943, the Vercors was largely under Resistance control and French military commanders and civil administrators had been appointed. Following abduction of sightseeing German officials on 19 January

1944, a German motorised unit burned a deserted Resistance base at Les Baraques-en-Vercors in the northern zone of the Plateau.

Now the OKW had determined to destroy the Maquis — the French Resistance — before the Allies landed, to avoid fighting in the rear, as had become almost a routine on the Eastern Front where the partisans had, in effect, a trained and well-equipped army. The mountains offered the Maquis a base and a refuge, but also a trap. To the Plateau de Glières east of Annecy came numerous soldiers and civilians, supplied with arms enough to equip 5,000 men. The policy of the SOE and the combined Resistance headquarters was to create an 'absces de fixation' to hold down German troops, but on 26 March 1944, Gen Lt Karl Pflaum's 157 Reserve Inf. Div and SS units attacked the plateau, supported from the air. One hundred and eighty prisoners were taken, to become subject of a quarrel between the Kommando Sicherheitsdienst Lyon and the French collaborationist Milice who were less inclined to be brutal. Subsequent action to seek out the partisans in surrounding villages began under the name of FRÜHLING (Springtime). At St. Claude, *Obersturmbannführer* Klaus Barbié, heading Gestapo (Amt-IV) required men of ages 18-45 to register, then a search began; 204 hideaways were found, 23 arrests were made and 148 Frenchmen killed.

Many in the population of the 'Zone Libre' had simply adapted to a different way of life than they had known before the war, with some restrictive conditions on trade and business, but rural life was little altered. ATTILA, the full German occupation of Vichy France, which began on 12 November 1943, changed every aspect of life; the subsequent call-up of men to work for Germany, clearly almost as slave labour, brought a realisation among the urban population of their vulnerability to the whims of local German (and particularly SS) commanders.

## Guerilla war in France

6 June 1944 — OVERLORD; American, British and Canadian armies landed on the coast of Normandy. In spite of 'uncertain' weather a few Me 410 and Bf 109 reconnaissance aircraft had recorded the movement of transport and watched the gradual assembling of shipping of all kinds in the estuaries and small ports of south-western England. Simultaneous coverage of all ports would, of course, provide a true record count of the total tonnage, so the aircraft made sorties on alternate days. There appeared to be no pattern in the shipping movements until late April. On the 25th reconnaissance showed 234 Landing Craft, Tank (LCT), 254 smaller vessels, 170 Landing Craft, Infantry (LCI) and 15 transports capable of lifting 70,000 men at Portsmouth, Selsey and Southampton, indicating very clearly to the OKW that the Allies would attack towards Brittany and Normandy despite a long sea-crossing.

There was no confirmation from the Abwehr's 'turned' agents and no special action was taken to counter the threat. British radio-deception teams won a great victory by persuading the OKW of the formation of FUSAG, the



fictional First US Army Group, in East Anglia and of an Infantry Division in Scotland. These imaginary forces appeared to the German Oberkommando to be set for a landing on the coast of the Pas de Calais and perhaps in Denmark, rather too close to the Fatherland for ease of mind. So the Army held back from committing all available units to combat the Normandy beachheads and, although an Allied landing on the Mediterranean coast of France was deemed a certainty, forces in the south were re-deployed and several formations were called upon to fight in the north.

Shortly after the landings in Normandy, in the southwest of France SS *Obersturmbannführer* Lammerding's 2.SS-Panzer Division ('Das Reich') began its move to join the battle in the north, harassed by small Resistance groups. On 9 June, a detachment was sent to Tulle to rescue the German garrison which was suffering grievous casualties (139 killed). The detachment hanged 99 and deported 101 townspeople in reprisal, a taste of things to follow. Within the terms of the Hague Convention of 1907 'concerning the Laws and Customs of War on Land', the taking and execution of hostages is permitted "in reprisal for violent acts by the population of an occupied country". It is surprising to find that Germany still held to this Convention, albeit in an extreme way. In fact, one aim of reprisal was to introduce young new recruits to the horrors of total warfare, as practised by the Waffen-SS. The following day a special detachment under instructions from SS *Obersturmbannführer* Otto Dickman (1. Btl, 'Der Führer' Rgt) set off for St. Junien, 30 km from Limoges. The small convoy was supposed to be carrying Divisional Records, but the vehicles, with a guard of ten men, carried 600 kg of gold and valuables looted by a few of the Divisional Staff but not 'officially' recorded. During the day, *Sturmabführer* Helmut Kampfe, commander of the 3. Btl was kidnapped by a Resistance unit, taken to Limoges and later shot.

By chance the 'loot' convoy under *Sturmabführer* Bruno Walter also was ambushed by a group of seven partisans who were heading for sabotage operations at Nieul. Only one German survived and the surprise find of booty was hurriedly taken away to be hidden. The next morning a furious Lammerding summoned Dickman to Limoges and told him of the two disasters. They presumed that the gold had been taken to the nearest large village, Oradour-sur-Glane, so Dickman (with only 12 hours before the Division was to move on) was given the task of finding it. The 3.Kompanie (under *Hauptsturmbannführer* Kahn) with 120 men, two half-tracks and eight trucks, and two French Milice members as interpreters, found the burnt-out remains of Walter's convoy and turned off to Oradour. Dickman told Kahn only that they were looking for arms and 'prohibited merchandise'. Nobody in Oradour could give answers to the questioning so the interpreters were killed and the troops began searching the village for the non-existent 'merchandise.' The men and boys were shot and the women and children herded into the church which was set on fire. Almost the entire population died — 642 shot or burned — and the news

was known throughout France within a few hours. Ironically, there were a large number of conscripted Frenchmen from Alsace-Lorraine within the ranks of 'Das Reich' at this time.

The destruction of Oradour was on a scale not previously found in the West, although such brutal measures were commonplace on the Eastern Front. The action, supposedly in retaliation for the loss of Kampfe, caused a reaction of fear but also loathing for all things German. As a result, when small German non-combatant units began heading eastwards after Hitler's order to form a new defensive line closer to Germany, many were ambushed, their members often tortured and most were shot. Their documents, to the distress of later writers, were burned in their vehicles or scattered through the hills and forests of Languedoc and Limousin.

A number of writers have belittled the activities of the FFI. In some cases this has been justified for many Frenchmen who had little contact with the Resistance organisations or took no part in their operations later claimed to have been fighters for freedom or to have provided under-cover support. In fact, many Resistance groups became thorns in the flesh of the Wehrmacht by threatening sabotage of industrial, rail and hydro-electric installations. In some cases they besieged small German garrisons protecting those installations and there independent units of Luftwaffe paratroops were used to relieve the beleaguered guard units. The Kommando Schäfer was held in readiness for such 'special operations'.

S.O.2, the operational section of the Special Operations Executive, was set up by Britain's War Cabinet on 19 July 1940 with the intent to "set Europe ablaze", arming and coordinating partisan groups in France. SOE intended these groups to act in concert with liberating Allied Armies but, when SO-SOE was re-formed in May 1944 as Special Forces HQ, answerable to the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force, SHAEF changed the intention, choosing to call out the whole of the French Resistance when the Normandy landings began. This action caused confusion and misunderstanding between the several agencies concerned with clandestine activities in France, SOE's F (French) and RF (Republique Française) Sections, Gen de Gaulle's Bureau Central and M.I.6, Britain's Secret Intelligence Service.

Thus far, the Allies had paid little attention to the Vercors, although several drops had been made in Drome of men (HOMO) and weapons (ARMA). The first drop of weapons to the Vercors was made by a Halifax of 161 Sqn RAF on 13 November 1943, to Darbounouse, on the eastern flank of the plateau, but the stores were spread over a wide area in deep snow. A few days later, radio-locating vehicles enabled the Germans to entrap at St. Martin the two operators in contact with London and Algiers. Communications with the Vercors were broken until members of an M.I.6/SOE team, UNION, landed at 'Agonie' (Eymeux) on 5 January, reaching the plateau on the 7th.

During the early months of 1944 the Halifaxes of three RAF squadrons continued dropping agents ('Joes') and



matériel into France, so the enemy increased the severity of the 'ratissages', intending to deter the civilian population from supporting the 'terrorists'.

After a Resistance raid on the rail depot at Les Portes de Valence on 28 January, *Gen-Lt* Karl Pflaum took charge of all anti-partisan operations in the HVSt 590 area.

On 9 March a drop was made to 'Seville' (Peyrus) on the western slopes, then an urgent request from UNION's *Cdt* Pierre Fourcaud for supplies brought about a drop of containers and packages to Gabin by 12 Halifaxes of 138 Sqn on 10/11 March; of machine-guns to 'Coupe-Papier — Paper Knife' on the 16th and to 'Papier-Gomme — Eraser' on 9 April. News of the drops caused the enemy such concern that, on 16 April, 1,000 Milice cordoned off the plateau and occupied Vassieux in an attempt to discover the caches of arms. For some weeks, drops in the region were confined to the Drome Valley, except for those to 'Banane — Banana' (Combovin) in the south-west.

On 4 April the Comité d'Action Militaire incorporated the diverse Resistance headquarters under the authority of *Gen* Marie-Pierre Koenig, named C-in-C of the Forces Françaises de l'Interieur. The FFI and all other French Forces were declared to be under the Supreme Commander, HQ Allied Expeditionary Force, *Gen* Dwight Eisenhower. Koenig informed his commanders:

*"You must accept orders only signed by me for all matters directly concerned with FFI means of operations and orders for attack. This does not alter the instructions and plans already issued for 'P'. These are still to be carried out when alerted by the BBC phrases already agreed."*

## OVERLORD

OVERLORD, originally planned for May 1944, was conceived as a 'hammer-blow' with a complementary landing on the southern coast of France, unwisely named ANVIL. Because it required the release of troops from Italy the landing, renamed DRAGOON, was postponed until August. The delay allowed the Germans to counter threats to the Rhone Valley in the rear of *Gen* Weise's 19. Armee occupying the countryside of Provence.

Previously Otto Skorzeny had thoroughly reconnoitred several areas in connection with reports which were required as to the suitability of mountain areas in central and southern France for siting mountain redoubts for the OKH. None had the security of road communications sufficient to keep them free from partisan attack without complete control in the air and that could not possibly be maintained against the Anglo-American air power available in North Africa and central Italy. Of course, the possibilities had not been lost on the Direction of the French Resistance movements, who saw military opportunities in the Northern Alps or plateau of Vercors in the case of an Allied landing on the Mediterranean coast.

## Enter Geschwader Bongart

On 15 April *Gen-Lt* Fritz von Brodowski became commander of HVSt 588. The same day, the III. and IV. Gruppen of Fliegerzielgeschwader (Aerial Target Wing)

2, which provided services for anti-aircraft gunnery training in the West, were formed into an *ad hoc* air unit under the command of *Oberst* Hermann Freiherr von dem Bongart, Offizier für Sonderaufträge (special missions) at Luftflotte 3 in Paris. Equipment of this 'Geschwader Bongart', based at Bourges, included a variety of light aircraft suitable to be used only where there was no Allied air opposition, Bf 109 and Bf 110 fighters, Ju 88 bombers and Reggiane Re 2002 *Ariete* II fighter-bombers for ground attack. The Stab and the 8./FZG 2 were stationed at Bourges and nearby Lissay-Lochy at the beginning of June, then were moved to Nancy with seven Re 2002s to support the army in operations against the Resistance. It should be noted that despite its special status, this unit was *not* part of KG 200.

The Order of Battle for Luftflotte 3 immediately after D-Day shows Luftlandegeschwader 1 and 2 as having some 430 aircraft deployed to airfields in southern and central France. The Stab LLG 1 was stationed at Nancy and most of the aircraft of the Gruppen were held at the disposal of the loosely-termed 'Transport Staffeln Fallschirmjäger', Nancy. In all, there were 52 Do 17 glider tugs and 187 DFS 230A assault gliders of the LLG 1, 114 He 111s and 53 Go 242 transport gliders available for anti-partisan operations under the direction of the 'Armee Oberkommando Nancy'.

By late June, the Geschwader held 35 Re 2002s taken over by the Luftwaffe, of which 22 were operational. Units of the Geschwader began anti-partisan operations from airfields in eastern and central France early in July and a tactical command post was set up by the Geschwader Bongart to control Valence-Chabeuil. There, Ju 88A-14 torpedo-bombers of the II./KG 26 were joined by a number of aircraft from the III./KG 26 for anti-partisan operations.

When OVERLORD began on 6 June 1944, the British asked how the Maquis in the south-east might support DRAGOON. Taken to London, Dalloz explained the MONTAGNARDS plan, insisting that "if the Vercors card must be played" it should be only after landings in the South, but a message, "Le Chamois des Alpes bondit" (The Alpine chamois is leaping), had already called out the Maquis at Vercors.

On 13 June, SHAEF was persuaded that the Resistance could play a major part in the liberation of France. Machine-guns dropped near La Chapelle-en-Vercors on 13 June and to Meudre the next day were in action within hours and on 18 June the US Eighth Army Air Force allocated the 3rd Air Division's 180 Boeing B-17s to air supply.

In Normandy, by July 1944, the American, British and Canadian Armies were engaged in a battle of attrition against Rommel's Heeresgruppe B. Although the Oberkommando der Wehrmacht was still uncertain whether the Allies would make another landing in France or Denmark, they had no doubt there would soon be an invasion of the South of France.

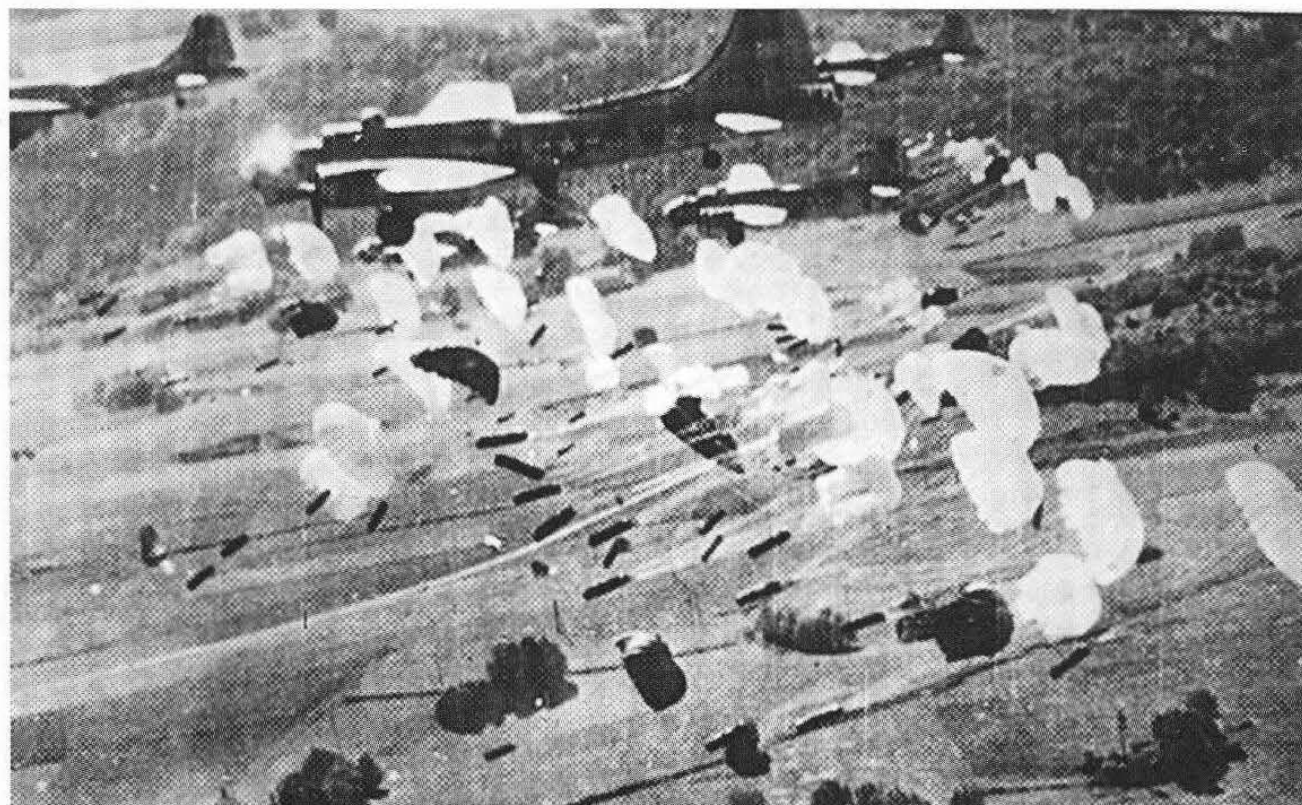
The F and RF Sections of SOE and other Maquis groups were united to form a single command under *Gen*



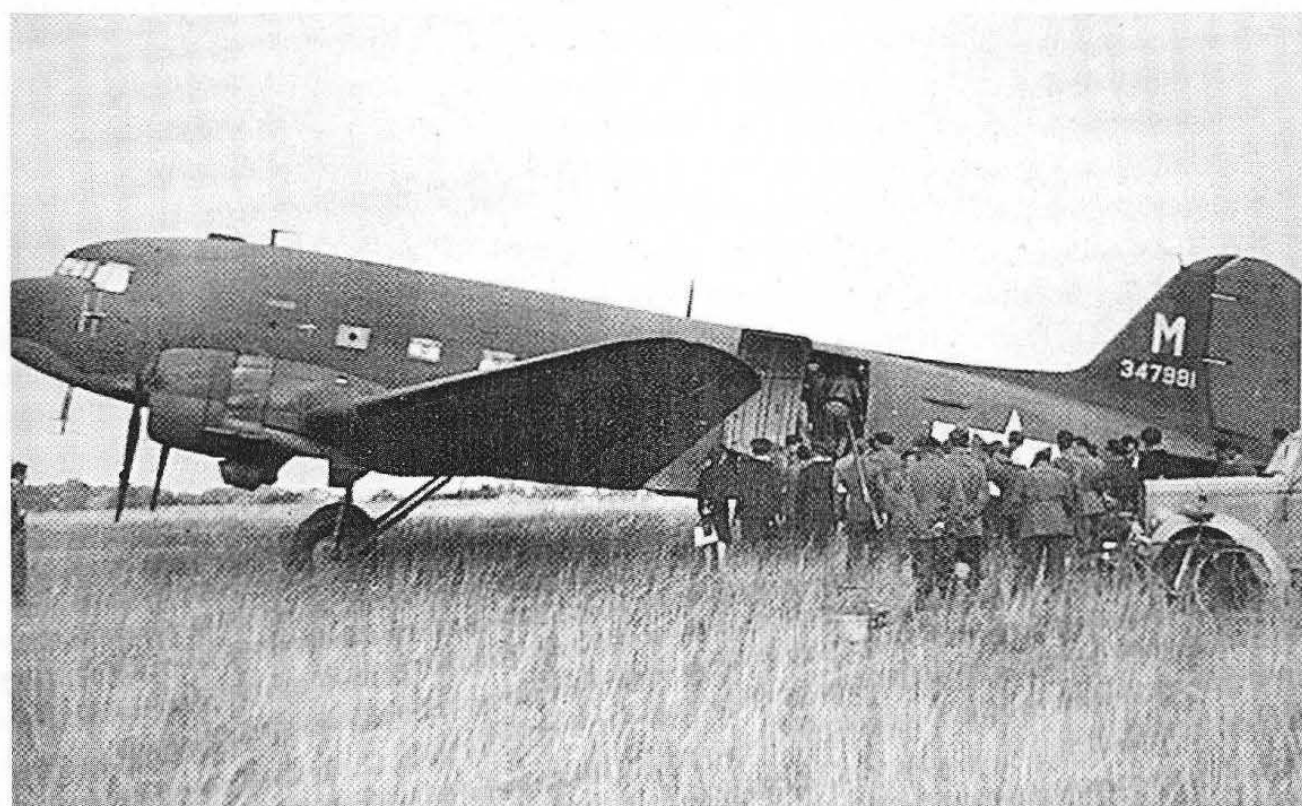
**131:** French resistance troops marching past on parade. St. Martin-en-Vercors, 25 June 1944



**132:** US 94th Bomb Wing B-17s dropping supplies onto the Vercors during Operation CADILLAC, early morning, 14 July 1944



**133:** A C-47 Dakota of the 801st Bomb Group (II) (Provisional), 8th USAAF. The 'Carpetbagger' Special Duties squadrons of the 8th Air Force were based at Harrington, Northants. Although constantly in support of the Resistance in northern France, they were only marginally involved with the Vercors. On 7 July Lt Col Clifford Heflin, the Group CO, flew a C-47 of the 406th BS to Izenore (Ain) to deliver another member of 'Union' and two members of 'Eucalyptus'. The agents were then taken in disguise by road to the Vercors, reaching there on 10 July





de Gaulle on 1 July; a new headquarters called the Etat-major des Forces Françaises de l'Interieur (EMFFI), responsible to his Provisional Government for policy but to SHAEF for operations. No provision was made for MONTAGNARDS in SHAEF planning for OVERLORD or by Allied Forces HQ Mediterranean, planning DRAGOON.

By late July 1944 the attention of the press covering the European Theatre of Operations was centred on the Allies' lack of progress in Normandy. Little heed was paid to operations by German forces besieging the Massif du Vercors where the Resistance had taken control.

Longman's *Chronicle of the Second World War* tells how the 'Republic of the Vercors' began life on 3 July 1944, when the area was declared 'liberated territory' and occupied by some 3,000 maquisards. The Germans responded by laying siege to the 'republic' with 1,500 troops.

### KG 200's paratroops

After the Luftwaffe Fallschirmjäger parachute troops suffered severely in Crete, Hitler told their commander, *Gen* Kurt Student, "The days of the paratroops are numbered." Although most of these troops were subordinated to the army to fight as infantry, the Oberkommando der Luftwaffe maintained control of a few independent units, 'zur besonderen Verwendung'. In passing it should be noted that the terms Fallschirmjäger and Fallschirmtruppen were applied to all Luftwaffe airborne troops.

When KG 200 was formed, the Geschwader's II.Gruppe, based at Berlin-Finsterwalde, was commanded by *Maj* Hans Jungwirth, veteran of the I./FJRgt 5 in Tunisia, and incorporated his independent unit of Fallschirmtruppen, set up to develop and operate new weapons under the cover name 'Transportkolonne XI-Ost'.

Luftwaffe troops convicted of military offences were offered the opportunity of 'redemption by combat', their criminal records being destroyed if they accepted. Those given sentences of longer than eight months were offered service in a Bewahrungseinheit (custodial unit), usually a Luftwaffe Jäger-Bataillon zbV. In March 1944 *Maj* Fritz Stormer of the Stab KG 200 and *Maj* Schacht from *General* Student's Staff selected volunteers from among military offenders in the depot of Tangerhütte. These men were moved to Dedelstorf to begin training as nine-man glider assault sections with a rapid-firing MG42, a Mauser K98k sniper's rifle and StG44 machine-carbines; the 3. Staffel of II./KG 200 was thereby expanded to include some 350 men. During subsequent training a further selection took place, the final test being a three-day exercise without food; any man exhausted at the finish was deemed "of no use to us".

By the end of May, the Fallschirmjäger were ready for action but, following a disagreement, Kommodore *Oberst* Heigl removed Jungwirth from his post and *Oblt* Schäfer was hurriedly summoned on 8 June to command the 3./II./KG 200 which then became the 'Kampfgruppe Schäfer', re-named the 7./KG 200 to conform with the usual Luftwaffe numeration. The Kampfgruppe was

placed at the disposal of Luftflotte 3 in Paris, where *Oberst* Heigl and *Maj* Stormer were to advise on their deployment. On 11 July *Hptm* Gunther Hurlin was appointed Gruppenkommandeur II./KG 200 in place of *Maj* Jungwirth.

While discussion and argument raged about the morality and of the technical problems involved with the 'special weapons', the activities of the I./KG 200 continued, hindered only by unrealistic demands from the Intelligence agencies and by the weather. Heigl's problems with II. Gruppe partly involved the lack of fuel for development and training — a result of the Geschwader being apart from the normal Luftflotte supply organisations. One part of his responsibilities, however, gave no reason for complaint; this was the 'Kampfgruppe Schäfer' of KG 200, which surprisingly was the only part of the Gruppe whose operations were eventually fully successful, although of no outstanding military value.

Friedrich Schäfer was a keen and ambitious officer who was known for having written the 'arm-swinging, foot-stamping' *Lied der Fallschirmjäger*, supposedly a 'hymn' to enhance the morale of paratroops about to go into action but often found as a feature at Hitler Youth camps and other semi-social gatherings.

*Oberst* Heigl and *Maj* Stormer flew to Paris, to HQ Luftflotte 3, to supervise the one-time Transportkolonne XI-Ost while under the control of *Gen-Lt* V. Brodonski, their intention being to ensure that the highly-trained men of the 'Kampfgruppe Schäfer' were employed as one integrated unit and not used, as were other Luftwaffe paratroops, piecemeal against the well-organised Resistance groups threatening or investing small isolated German garrisons in the mountains of central France.

Later, a captured pilot of the 6./KG 200 related how 60 flying personnel of the II. Gruppe were moved from Dedelstorf to Essey-les-Nancy early in June, formed into 'crews' and assigned 17 Do 17E 'tug' aircraft and 14 DFS 230 assault gliders. These aircraft were seemingly provided by Luftlandegeschwader (Air-landing Wing) 1 at Strasbourg-Entzheim, under the control of *Fsj.*AOK 1 at Nancy. The men of the 7./KG 200 were taken by Ju 52 to Nancy and were there joined by glider-pilots of the I./LLG 1. The captured pilot told how the crews, with no experience of towing, were each required to undertake one training flight before flying the aircraft to Lyon-Bron early in July and that three tows crashed fatally at Dijon-Longvic, en route. It is not clear whether or not the pilot's information was reliable; veterans of the I./LLG 1 insisted that the crews for the subsequent operation came only from their Gruppe. No losses at Dijon are recorded in the casualty lists of KG 200.

### Back to MONTAGNARDS

Meanwhile, of support for MONTAGNARDS, Jacques Soustelle (Secretary-General of the Comité d'Action en France) told de Gaulle;

"a) From the aviation point of view, could we not bring back a 'Picardie' Group now in the Middle East, which



would increase the provision for measures already taken?

b) Could we not ask the Allies to place aircraft at the disposal of our pilots? c) Should we not try to get agreement with the Allies about the 1,800 parachutists presently at Trapani in Sicily. That all these paratroops, well-armed and well-trained, came from France would be a point of value to the FFI. Could we not form new paratroop units in spite of all the difficulties?"

Col Henri Zeller, newly-appointed to command the Armée Secrète in the Southern Zone, was unaware of MONTAGNARDS until he reached the Vercors on 14 June. He realised that the materiel already delivered was insufficient for those who had answered SHAEF's orders. A call for arms was partly met by drops to Papier-Gomme, Coupe-Papier and Gabin, but the capacity of RAF supply aircraft (18 in January, increased to about 30 in May 1944) was quite inadequate to meet the needs of the Vercors. To later commentators, a ceremonial parade held at St. Martin-en-Vercors on 25 June, with enthusiastic popular support, implied over-confidence on the part of the Vercors HQ.

The US Eighth Air Force planned a massive escorted daylight drop for 22 June, postponed because of unfavourable weather. This Operation ZEBRA, took place on the 25th, 180 bombers taking part. The dropping zone at Vassieux, Gabin, was renamed 'Taille-Crayon' (Pencil Sharpener) to accord with the system of related names applied to other fields on the Vercors, all names of office stationery.

On 25 June an enemy column from Valence moved against La Rochette, above Crest, with air support by the Geschwader Bongart. A Ju 88 was hit by machine-gun fire and crashed near Ourches on the Montagne de Cote Blanche, killing the crew of five.

In the early hours of 29 June two Allied teams were dropped to Vassieux by 624 Sqn; Maj D. Longe's inter-Allied 'Jedburgh'\* mission EUCALYPTUS, intended to provide radio liaison with SOE in London and Algiers, and Cpt V. Tupper's 15-man US/French Canadian OSS Operational Group JUSTINE, to instruct the resistants in the use of American weapons. The drop was soon reported to the enemy who, not realising that many of the parachutes bore containers, were persuaded that a battalion of parachute troops had been landed.

On the 29th, to ensure the safety of Allied aircraft landing at Vassieux, Soustelle ordered a Cpt Tournissa to the Vercors. Tournissa would have an 'S-Phone' to allow direct communication and guide an aircraft onto the landing strip. During the day, 12 Ju 88A-14s of the II./KG 26 bombed St. Nazaire-en-Royans and Pont-en-Royans, on the Bourne at the western entry to the Plateau, causing extensive damage and killing eight civilians.

On the Vercors, the commanders' confidence was again demonstrated by a ceremonial and military parade

at St. Martin on 3 July, celebrating the restoration there of the République Française. SHAEF's call for total mobilisation of the Resistance caused an irreversible influx of men. Many were 'sedentaires', long-recruited maquisards, who had remained at home and at work awaiting the call, and patriots untrained in the use of weapons. Longe's briefing, "The Vercors is not given high priority at the present time" caused dismay but his further orders: "...to persuade the local chiefs not to enrol more men than they can properly arm", were impracticable; the total had already risen to 3,451 men.

Cpt Robert Bennes, parachuted into France in March and directed to the Plateau on 7 July, promptly set up a radio link at La Britière, Huet's headquarters, to organise and control future air drops of arms and men.

The 'Carpetbagger' Special Duties squadrons of the 801st Bomb Group (II) (Provisional), US Eighth Air Force, were based at Harrington, Northants. Although constantly in support of the Resistance in Northern France, they were only marginally involved with the Vercors. On 7 July Lt Col Clifford Heflin, commanding the Group, flew a C-47 of the 406th BS to Izenore (Ain) to deliver another member of UNION and two members of EUCALYPTUS. The agents were taken by road in vehicles disguised as belonging to the Milice, reaching Vercors on 10 July. With the Allied missions in operation, all seemed ready for 'fulfilment' of the MONTAGNARDS plan. During the night of 6/7 July a mission named PAQUEBOT (Mailboat), Cpt Tournissa and four other officers, were parachuted into Vassieux.

Tournissa inspected the proposed landing area and forecast that, with civilian help and by moving an electricity supply line, an airstrip could be completed by mid-July. He signalled: "Taille-Crayon being made ready. Period about a week. We shall have 1,050 m by 140m. Seems better to expect Hudson for the first mission instead of Dakota. Parking possible on landing ground. Details of strip and mission date will be sent later." Algiers asked for reassurance that the strip could accommodate a Dakota as no Hudson was available — in any case, a Dakota could carry a greater quantity of supplies. Tournissa promptly established a civilian 'Compagnie de Travailleurs' to work on the strip but the labour of clearing, filling and levelling the area with a heavy roller was made so difficult by constant harassment by a patrolling Fi 156 *Storch* that completion took twice as long as forecast, much of the work being carried out between dusk and first light.

On 10 July, a convoy of German troops was ambushed near Lalley on the RN.75 by the Operations Group and a section of the 11th Cuirassiers. Nine were killed and 15 wounded for French losses of four dead and two wounded. The Germans apparently believed that the supposed battalion of American paratroops laid in ambush. It has been claimed that this action caused the Germans to mount their offensive against the Vercors, but plans for the Unternehmen VERCORS were already completed and, as Allied aerial reconnaissance showed, by 12 July German troops were converging on the Plateau. German air

\*Three-man international sabotage teams, one British, one American and one French, intended to act as liaison and trainers to resistance groups.



activity also was increasing. That same day an enemy aircraft bombed La Chapelle-en-Vercors, injuring four civilians, and the following evening, aircraft twice bombed Vassieux, killing five.

At the request of HQ Special Forces in England, Bastille Day, 14 July, was celebrated by another spectacular daylight drop of arms, Eighth Air Force Operation No.472, CADILLAC. It was intended that a massive supply mission to areas secured by the Resistance in Central and Southern France be accompanied by fighter-bomber attacks on the airfields at Avord and Bourges where the Stab/Geschwader Bongart was stationed, but heavy clouds caused cancellation of the airfield attacks. For the supply missions, three forces of B-17s (324 aircraft) of the 3rd Bomb Division were to drop arms containers to seven dropping zones. At 09.06 hrs, in bright sunshine, 36 B-17s began dropping supply containers over Taille-Crayon but the patriots remained starved of the heavy infantry weapons they so badly needed for effective defence.

The last B-17 of the 94th BG was attacked by two fighters as it began its run, then the enemy fighters began strafing the teams collecting the arms. Three B-17s were badly damaged before P-51s met the bombers north-west of Lyon and drove off the fighters. One of the FW 190s from

Aix/L'Enfant was hit by B-17 air-gunners and came down at Chateauneuf-de-Galaure, near St. Donat, where its pilot was made prisoner by the Resistance and driven to La Chapelle for interrogation. A German recovery unit, frustrated by his capture, shot five civilian hostages at Chateauneuf.

When reconnaissance by the II./KG 26 showed that no troops had been landed, 35 Ju 88s dropped clusters of anti-personnel bombs across the landing ground at Vassieux and attacked the village with high explosive and incendiary bombs. The church was set alight at 15.30 hours. Attacks on the village, where only machine-gun crews remained in position, continued until 17.00 hours, then the recovery teams led by *Cpts* Haczebrouck and Tournissa reassembled to collect the parachuted materiel. By then, Vassieux had been destroyed; of 85 buildings, 41 were on fire and only four were not badly damaged. A raid on La Chapelle injured eight people. No Ju 88s were lost, although 11 were rated temporarily unserviceable with damage from small-arms fire.



**134:** This series of pictures of troops and DFS 230 gliders wearing the 'H4' unit code of LLG 1 are believed to show troops in France undergoing familiarisation training, possibly shortly before the assault on the Vercors, where large numbers of such aircraft were used to deliver troops of 7./KG 200 onto the plateau



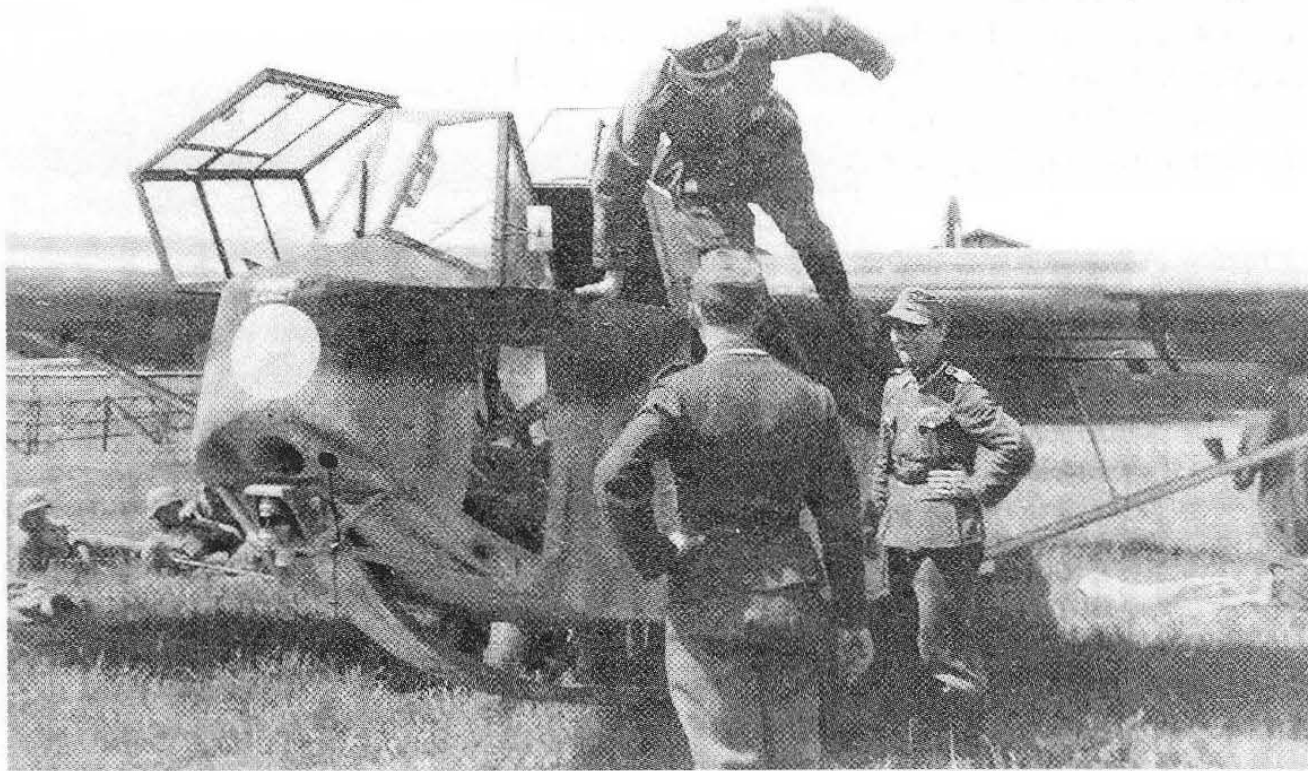
**135:** An unidentified Luftwaffe officer in conversation with his army equivalent. The small codes and camouflage are typical of those used on German gliders



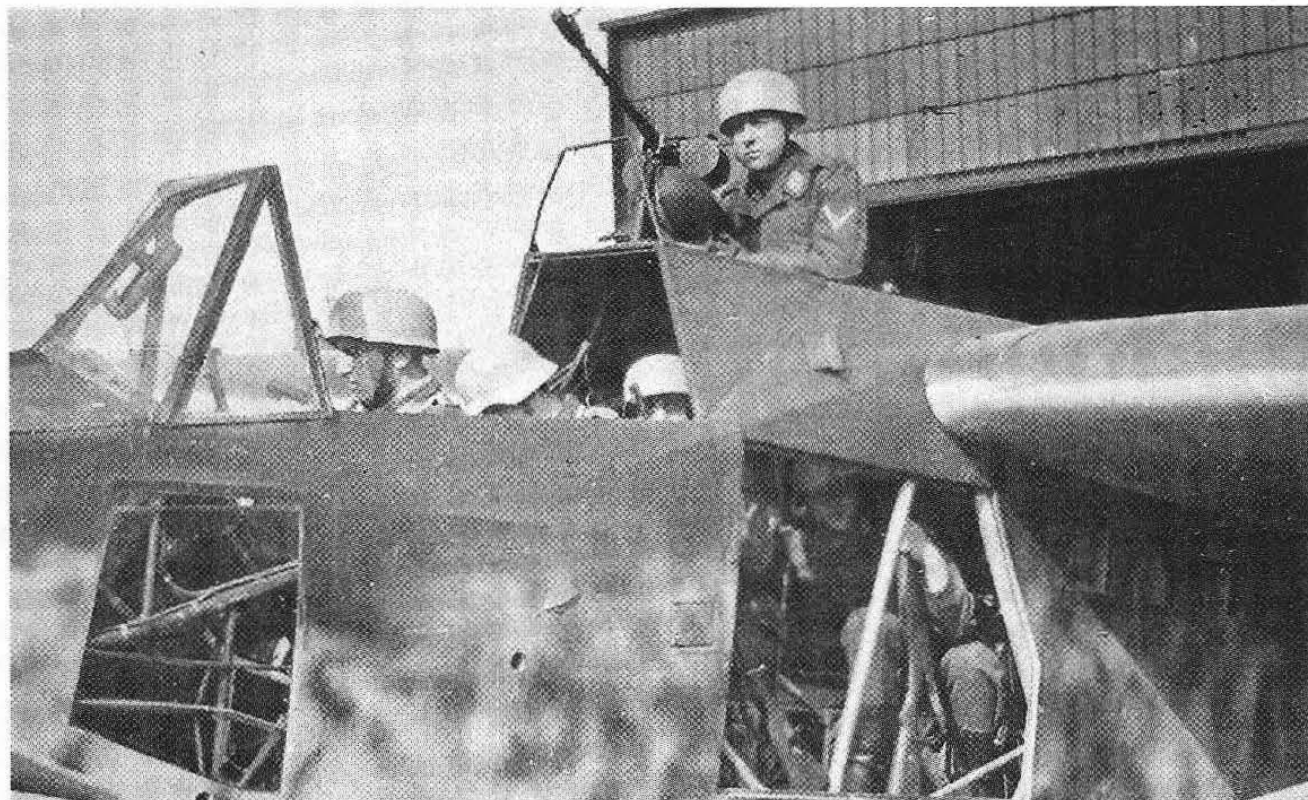
**136:** German troops in fatigue uniforms who do not appear to be taking events too seriously. Their helmets are standard army issue, not Luftwaffe paratroop style, which suggests that these are army troops, not air force



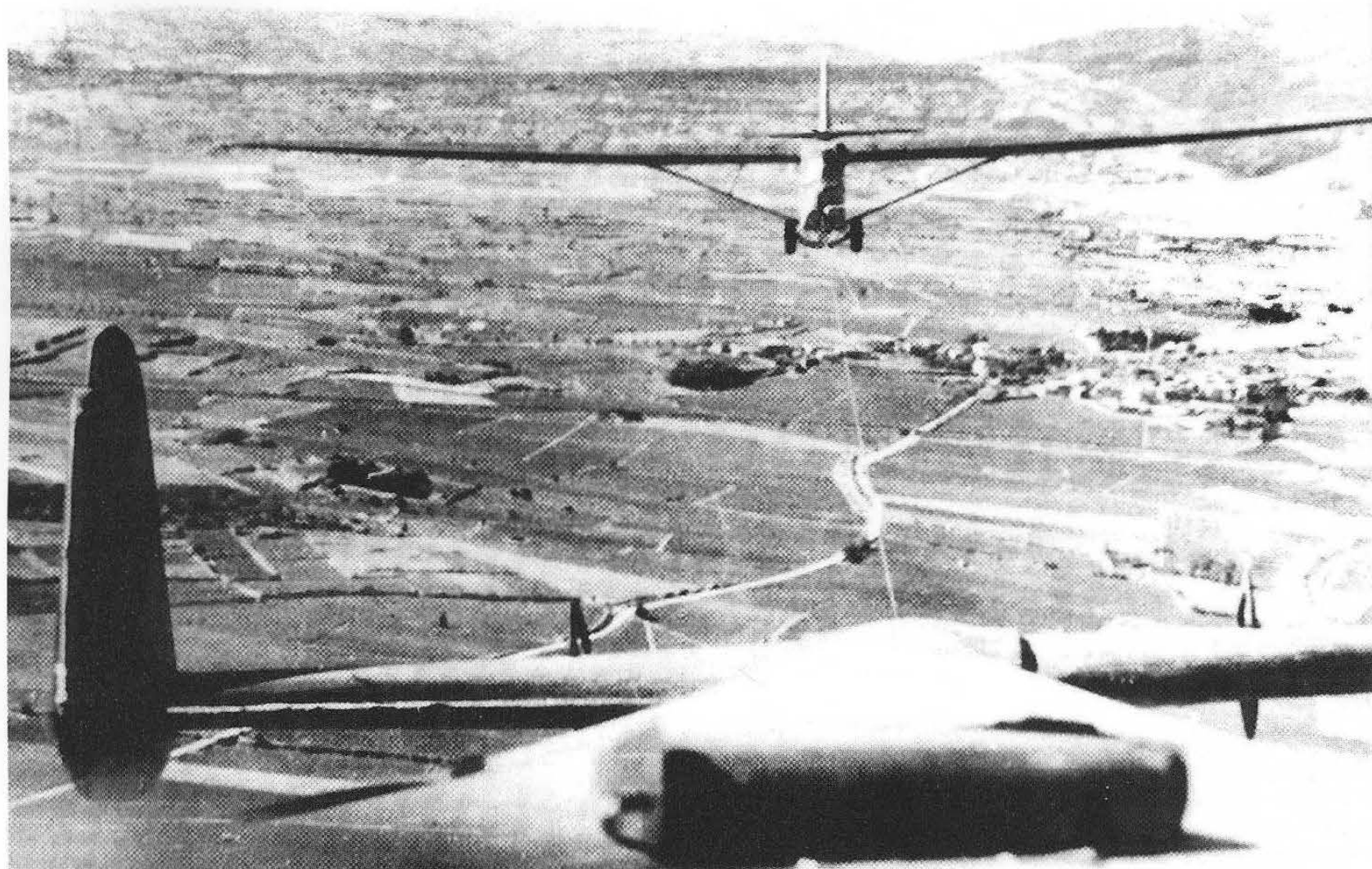
**137:** This picture of H4+2-13 gives a good view of the landing skid and compact size of the DFS 230. The white discs on nose and fin are presumably some kind of tactical marking. There is also a small and unfortunately illegible inscription on the nose. This could be a number (ZE227?) or even a name



**138:** Not believed to be taken on the same occasion as the preceding pictures, it is clear that these men are Luftwaffe troops as they wear the Fallschirmjäger helmet. The missing fabric from the fuselage suggests that this is a training aid to show the accommodation and the use of a machine gun for suppressant fire as the assault troops deplaned. This was usually manned by the pilot







## UNTERNEHMEN VERCORS

### KG 200 on the ground

The plan for Operation VERCORS, prepared for *Gen-Lt Pflaum* by *Oberst Schwehr*, commanding *Res.Geb. Jäg.Regt 1*, entailed co-ordinated attacks by three Army *Kampfgruppen*, bearing the names of their commanders, (including mobile units of the *157.Res.I.D.*) to deploy around the north and west of the Plateau; from Gresse in the south-east a *KGr Schwehr* and, from St. Nizier in the north-east, a *KGr Zabel* to move northwards via the Col de Vassieux. Simultaneously, by assault-gliders from Lyon, the *Luftwaffe's KGr Schäfer*, comprising troops of the *7./KG 200* and a detachment from the *KDS Lyon*, to attack the Resistance headquarters believed to be at Vassieux. These *Fallschirmjäger* were to be followed by a *Kompanie* of *Freiwilliger* flown from Valence to clear the heartland of the Vercors.

Reports that 300 outfits for paratroops were stored at Valence caused dismay at the Vercors HQ. *EUCALYP-TUS* operator *Lt Andre Pecquet* radioed Algiers:

"We cannot retake and hold Villard-de-Lans and St. Nizier until you have met our requests for arms and personnel. Germans moving towards Grenoble. We also fear infiltrations in the forests from the south-west and east and paratroops".

Algiers replied that no Allied airborne troops could be landed within a fortnight but proposed a drop of two more *OSS Groups* and quantities of bazookas and heavy machine-guns to Vassieux on the night of 22 or 23 July.

The intention was overtaken by events.

On 17 July, *DFS 230* gliders were taken by road from Nancy by an indirect route to Lyon-Bron, the Germans believing their route could not be tracked by intelligence agents of the Resistance. Additional *DFS* and *Gotha 242* transport gliders, perhaps from the *4./LLG 2* at Lyon, were moved by road to the airfield group at Valence/Chabeuil. The *DFS 230s* arrived at Bron during the afternoon of 20 July and were prepared for operations later in the day, to be fitted with retro-rockets and braking parachutes to shorten the landing run. For some weeks trials of braking parachutes had been undertaken at Dedelsdorf. The 'brake' was a khaki, circular parachute, diameter 17 m with a 4.5 m central opening, attached to the *DFS 230* by a rope 21 m long. The glider-pilot was to approach in a 60° dive and to open the 'brake' at about 305 m, to level-out and pull-up within some 9 m. The pilots were meticulously briefed with the aid of air photographs, taken only days before. *Oblt Schäfer* then addressed the *Fallschirmjäger*, for most of whom this was their first operation and they were eager to show their mettle. It is difficult to understand how he could express to them the 'Sprenger-Geist', the paratrooper's noble spirit, when he

*139 Above: A DFS 230 assault glider under tow by a Dornier 17E above the airfield at Istres-le-Tube, one of the principal Luftwaffe glider depots in southern France*



described the partisans as *francs-tireurs*, not to be treated as regular soldiers, and ordered his men to attack and burn all buildings that might shelter 'terrorists' without seeking to discover whether or not they housed civilians. No doubt he quoted one of Hitler's 'Ten Commandments' for parachutists: "Against an open foe, fight with chivalry but extend no quarter to a guerrilla".

In addition to a detachment of the 9. Panzer Division at La Paillasse, reports from FFI agents of the arrival at St-Paray, Tain and Valence of Freiwilliger companies, the storing in the Festival Hall at Valence of motor-cycles and paratroop kits provided sure evidence that an attack on the massif would not be long delayed. Late on 20 July EUCALYPTUS radioed a signal:

"Hervieux believes that attack on the Vercors is imminent. French paratroops and other needs must be delivered urgently but we judge that the attack will be made before our requests are met. The Vercors cannot hold out. Incidentally I believe that, if the Vercors forces are beaten, reprisals will be terrible. Request a daylight drop as powerful as before, and bombing of Chabeuil at the same time. Fighters could come over the Zone Sud after the drop".

The last sentence presumably meaning that Allied air-cover could be provided by MAAF.

At Vassieux, where work on the landing-ground was completed on 20 July, Tournissa took charge of the air defence east of the village whilst a detachment of Cuirassiers under *Cpt* Haezebrouck took up positions in woodland to the west, concealed from air observation. In his daily report, *Feldmarschall* von Runstedt, Oberbefehlshaber-West, recorded,

"Deployment of our forces for the operation to take place in the region of the Vercors completed on the evening of 20/7".

The Unternehmen VERCORS began at dawn on 21 July when men of the KGr Schwehr advanced from St. Nizier, some troops heading towards Autrans and Meaudre in north-western Vercors, others south-west to Valcheviere and the Bourne Gorge that divides the Plateau. There, finding the bridge blown, they stopped. To the east of the Massif, the KGr Schwehr spread out along a front of 5 km to ascend the passes of Berrieves, Chattons, La Selle and L'Aiguille.

At the same time, the airborne assault predicted and feared by Vercors headquarters began — but not from Chabeuil, as anticipated. At 05.00 hrs, the partisans and the few remaining inhabitants of Vassieux were awakened by bursts of machine-gun fire from the Fi 156 reconnoitring the area. While the ground forces were still leaving their start lines, 22 Do 17Es of the I./LLG 1 towing the DFS 230 gliders took off from Lyon-Bron for the 150 km flight down the Rhone Valley towards Valence. At 08.00 hours a signal from the Maquis du Drome reported 20 aircraft towing gliders coming from the north-west, passing north of Dieulefit. They turned north-east over the Drome Valley at 2500 m and, above the But de Neve, at the southern entry to the Vercors, the gliders were released to fly northwards to their landing zones, some 8 km away.

Cloud was low over the middle of the Plateau and work was virtually completed on the Taille-Crayon landing-ground when, at 08.30 hours, the workers were surprised to see aircraft approaching. Many assumed that these were transports carrying the promised troops for MONTAGNARDS but *Cpt* Tournissa and others responsible, knowing that no operation had been promised for that day, ran for arms and opened fire on the aircraft.

The number of German aircraft available at Chabeuil now proved to be greater than had been apparent from aerial reconnaissance. Aircraft under command of the Geschwader Bongart provided air cover; Fw 190s strafed the landing strip, causing many casualties among the civilian workers. The II./KG 26 made 36 sorties, dropping 7.5 tonnes of bombs. A first flight of seven gliders approached at about 900 km and dived steeply, two landing by the hamlet of La Mure, two at Le Chateau and three at Jossaud, 1.5 km north of Vassieux. The braking-parachutes of two gliders failed to open but all landed safely and the troops ran for shelter.

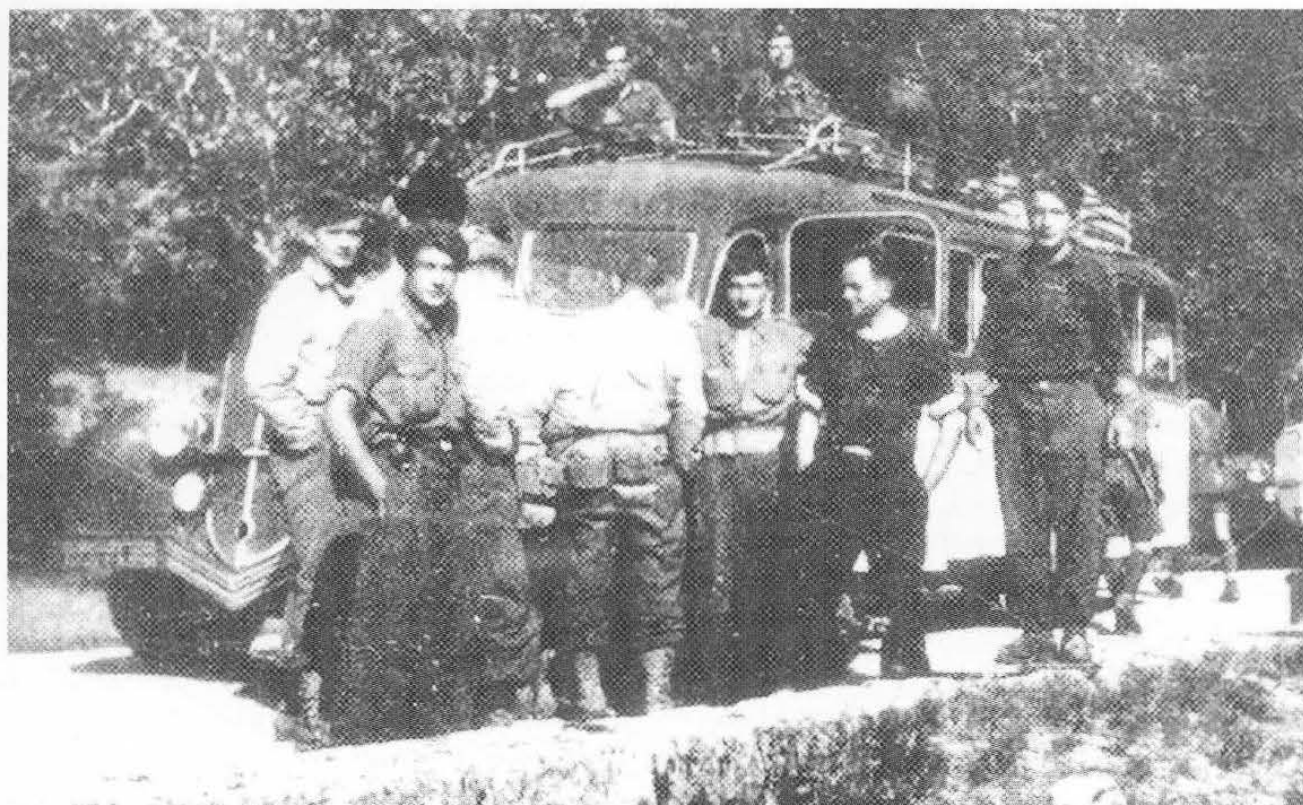
As the gliders came to rest at Vassieux, the pilots of the I./LLG 1 manned the MG 15s mounted in the gliders, providing covering fire as the troops ran for the nearest buildings, firing their carbines and throwing grenades. Within minutes a dozen airfield workers and some 20 other civilians were dead or dying. Schäfer's men took cover in the ruined village, one coming upon Tournissa and wounding him before the French officer shot him. The few remaining civilians and resistants were killed during a brief exchange of fire, then Schäfer's men formed a defensive 'hedgehog' (all-round firing position) in the ruins, their MG 42s forming intersecting arcs of fire.

At La Mure, some 30 resistants were asleep after a night march, leaving only two weary sentries on guard. Most of the men were killed before they could use their weapons. Four escaped and hid in outbuildings but they and six civilians shut in a pigsty were burned alive where they had taken shelter. Of the two resistants made prisoner, one was blinded and the other's tongue torn out before both were left to die slowly, hanged from opposite ends of a beam, so balanced on a tree branch that their feet just touched the ground.

The composition of the assault sections carried by these first gliders is uncertain. The Histoire de la Résistance and other works tell of SS troops taking part in the glider attack. French civilians believed the troops were 'allogenes' (aliens) or 'mongols'. Schäfer later confirmed that the men of the 7./KG 200 were German but it seems that a number came from the KDS Lyon, led by the notorious SS *Obersturmbannführer* Knab who was reported wounded that day.

A second flight of gliders carrying Fallschirmjäger landed around Vassieux, where the Germans believed the FFI HQ was situated; in fact the HQ was at St. Agnan-en-Vercors. Two gliders landed alongside the track to the Col de Chau, overlooking the area north of Vassieux. The rest, carrying *Hptm* Schäfer and the main force of his 7./KG 200, landed on the southern and eastern outskirts, three coming down on the Taille-Crayon landing-ground.

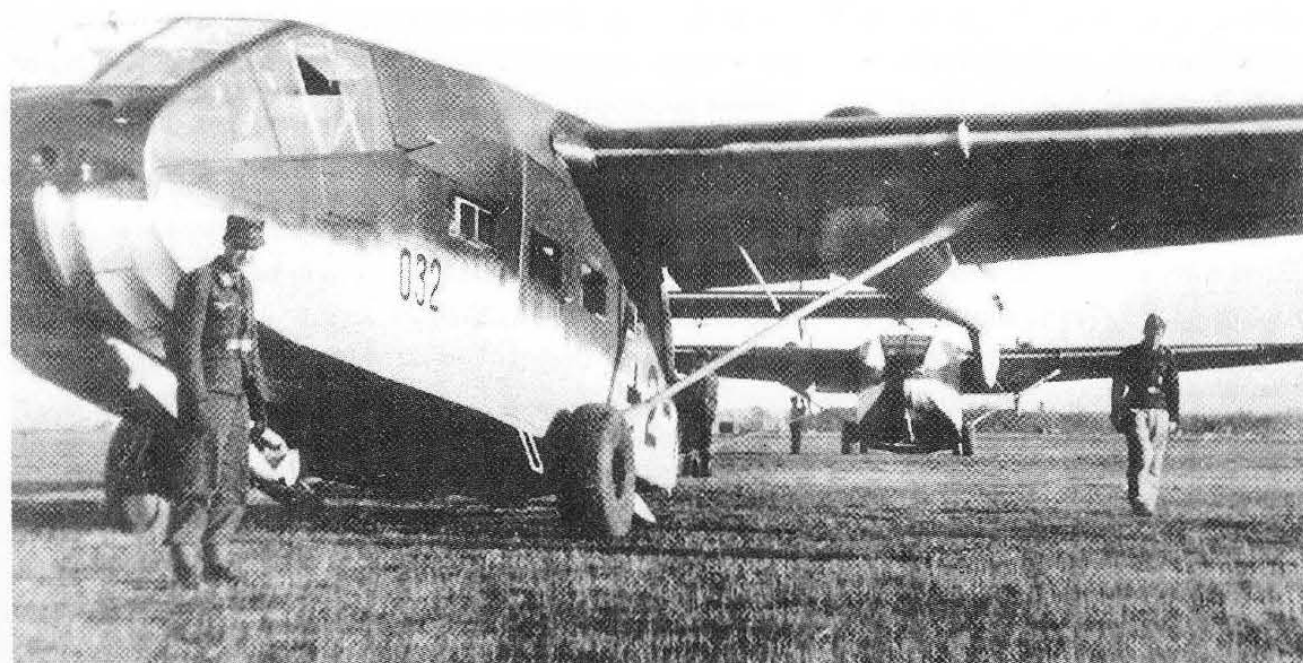




**140:** The FFI/OSS ambush group at Lalley after the action against a German motorised column near the Croix de la Croix Haut on 10 July 1944



**141:** As central France came under the control of the FFI and US Army during the summer of 1944, Luftwaffe bases were evacuated, the glider-tug component of I/LLG 1 being withdrawn to Germany. Here several DFS 230s can be seen, possibly at a northern Italian base, before the move



**142:** Most of the heavy lift glider capability of the Luftwaffe lay with the Gotha Go 242. These two are believed to be from 2./LLG 2



By this time the element of surprise had been lost and they came under heavy machine-gun fire from a few resistants concealed in bomb craters.

The gliders flown by *Uffz* Pyritz and *Uffz* Rink crashed, killing both pilots and seven men of the 7./KG 200. One of the first Germans to fall under fire from the patriots was *Hptm* Dr Max Burkard, Medical Officer of the II./KG 200.

*Cpt* Haezebrouck's 2nd Escadron, 11th Cuirassiers, was the only effective armed force at Vassieux. Early in the afternoon, he led it in a counter-attack which reached the outlying houses, where he and 11 of his men were killed by machine-gun fire. For the rest of the day the ruined village was kept under constant fire from the surrounding higher ground so that the men of KGr Schäfer were kept on the defensive. By nightfall, they were in desperate need of heavier infantry weapons because grenade launchers were ineffective when fired into the Cuirassiers' woodland positions, the grenades exploding in the crowns of the trees.

The leading troops of KGr Schwehr came under fire at 09.00 hrs as they moved on Villard-de-Lans and Correncon in the north-east. By midday, the KGr Schwehr was on the eastern passes, cloud concealing its advance, and by evening, the passes of the Chattons and La Selle had been taken.

The Daily Operations Report of Oberbefehlshaber (C-in-C) West recorded KGr Schäfer's casualties: 22 killed and 29 wounded — a 23 per cent casualty rate. In answer to their signals, arms and food were dropped during the afternoon by the Geschwader Bongart. At the end of the day, the Germans claimed a total of 220 resistants killed in the fighting at Vassieux and around the Vercors perimeter, something of an exaggeration, perhaps.

The 22 July began with low cloud and violent storms that persisted for some hours and restricted air support for the German forces on the heights. Nevertheless, an aircraft bombed St. Julien late in the morning and 67 sorties were flown by the aircraft of Bongart.

During the morning, in the clearer weather over the Rhone, the Do 17s, again reported flown by KG 200 crews, towed another 20 DFS gliders from Lyon-Bron to Valence-Chabeuil. If the oft-requested attack on Chabeuil had been mounted later that day, the situation at Vassieux could have been dramatically changed and the Resistance might have been able to put up a better organised defence of the Southern Vercors, free from threats to the movement of the few reserves.

As the hospital was exposed to attack from the east, the Vercors HQ ordered its evacuation. The wounded were transported towards Die but, as enemy forces were nearing the town, the small convoy of vehicles turned back and, harassed by enemy aircraft, headed for the little-visited Grotte de la Luire, 5 km east of Vassieux, where a casualty station was set up in the cave entrance.

At 06.00 hrs the KGr Schwehr began a series of sudden attacks on the passes, taking the Pas de la Sambue during the afternoon. *Col* Zeller, concerned at the inaction of Allied Headquarters, asked for mortars to be para-

chuted to his men, adding, "What the Germans can do, the English can do as well". Help from Allied fighters was requested and Huet signalled: "The men are weary and have no reserves. 300 vehicles and four tanks at Die. Request heavy bombing of Chabeuil and St. Nizier. Request drops at St. Martin where we are able to receive them. Help us soon". There was no response.

On the 22nd Chavant signalled Algiers:

"La Chapelle, Vassieux, St. Martin bombed by German aircraft. Enemy troops parachuted over Vassieux. Request immediate bombing. Time has run out since our organisation set up. Request deliveries of men, food, materiel. Morale of population excellent but will turn against you if you do not act and we shall agree with them in saying that those who are in London and Algiers have not understood the situation in which we find ourselves and are here considered criminal and uncaring. We repeat criminal and uncaring (criminel et lache)".

As a civilian, Chavant was able to declare opinions that his military colleagues on the Vercors were unable to express.

Lack of attention at HQ MAAF, under American command, may be attributed to the fact that although Gen de Gaulle's 1940 appeal to the French Nation was made with enthusiastic British support, the United States Government had not agreed with de Gaulle's assumption of the political leadership of 'Free France'. When his 'Gouvernement Provisoire de la République Française' was established, replacing the Comité Français de Libération Nationale on 3 June, and granted diplomatic recognition by the UK Government, Winston Churchill had still been unable to persuade the US Government to accept France as a major Allied Power, the Americans having preferred to negotiate the re-equipment of forces with those senior French officers who had commanded troops fighting the Germans or who had earlier been in authority in North Africa under the Vichy regime.

From the point of view of President Roosevelt and his military advisors, the French cause was not helped by the General's manner; Winston Churchill, while giving de Gaulle his political support, saw him as "a vain, even malignant man."

As yet unaware of events at Vassieux, by the 22nd de Gaulle remained unsure of the wisdom of a Free French bombing attack on the airfields, although Cochet sent,

"Absolutely essential to bomb Chabeuil and St. Nizier. Can foresee no other air operation at Vassieux airstrip which seems to be held by FFI. Request strafing of column on road Crest/Saillons/Die and southern slopes Col de Rousset. Daytime reconnaissance can locate friendly positions."

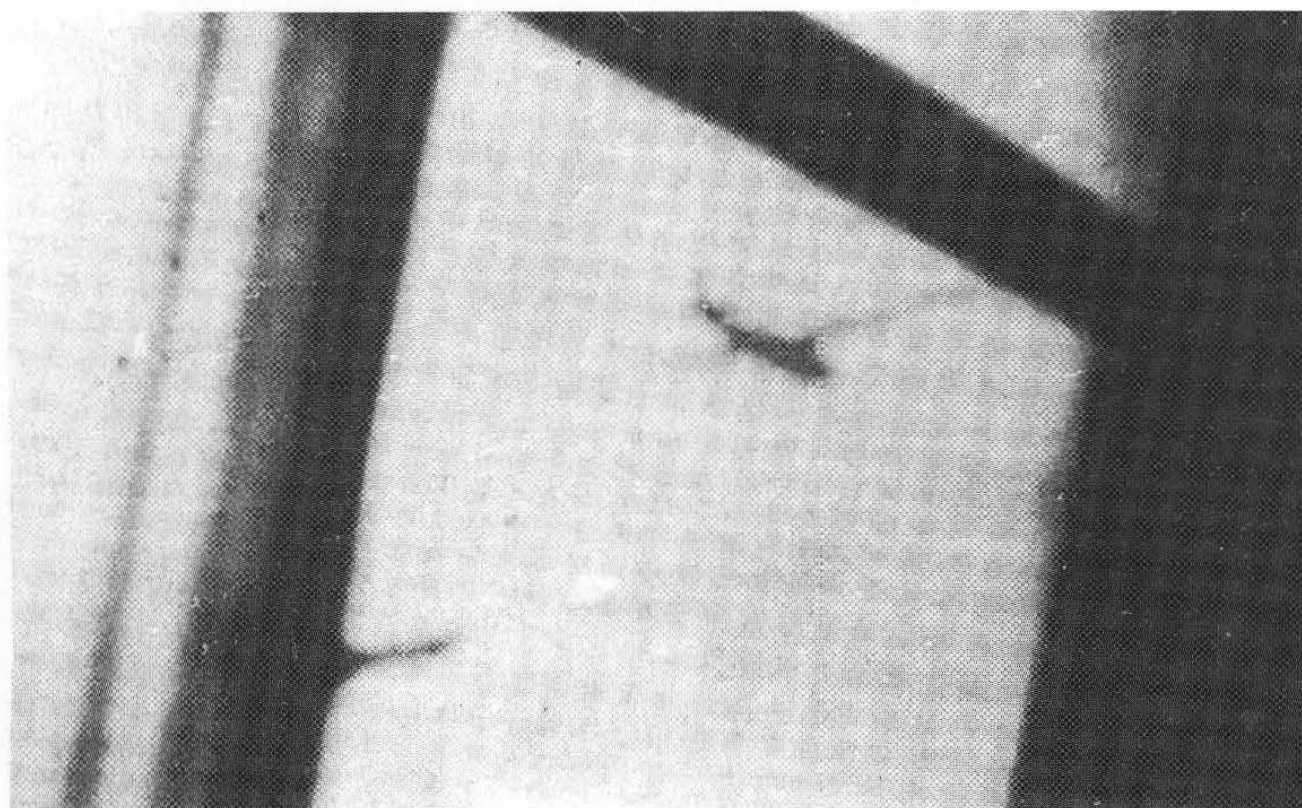
Then he radioed Koenig proposing air action: "If we knew exact situation on the Vercors and FFI plan of operations we could consider air intervention Sunday evening or on Monday (ie 23rd or 24th). Request you collect and re-transmit all intelligence".

From the west, more German troops took to minor tracks to St. Maurice, Hostun and La Beaume, threaten-

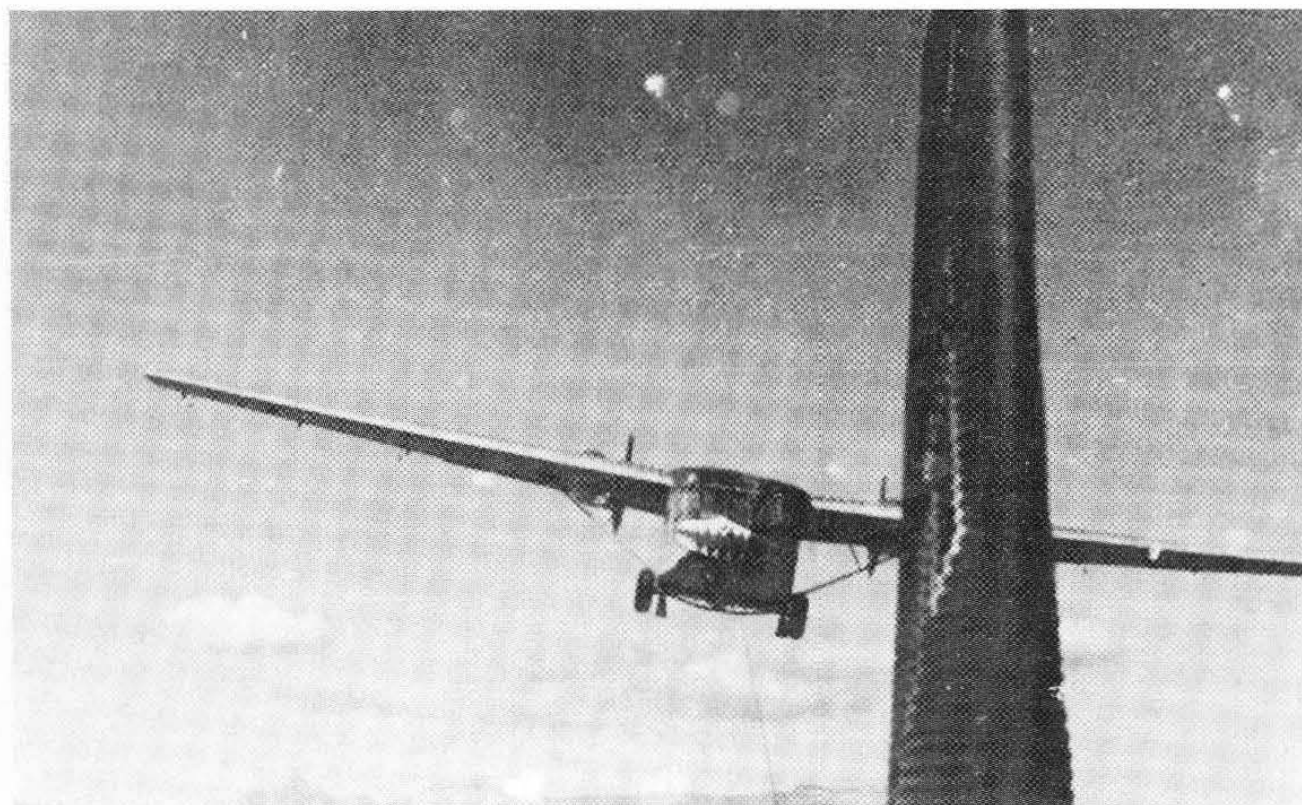




**143:** Do 17E tugs with DFS 230 gliders in tow during a training flight. They would have looked much the same on their approach to the Vercors. Note the flying attitude adopted by the Dorniers, presumably in response to the drag imposed by the gliders



**144:** A DFS 230 seen from the cockpit of a glider-tug on the way to Vassieux-en-Vercors



**145:** A Go 242 wallowing in the wake of a Ju 52/3m tug. Most larger Luftwaffe formations had one or two of these useful unpowered aircraft on charge



ing the resistants guarding the ways into the Forêt de Lente. By late afternoon the French units had retreated to the woods of La Sieurle and orders were given for the weary FFI units around Vassieux to withdraw during the night of 24/25 July.

The weather had so improved by 23 July that, at 07.25 hrs, 20 more DFS assault gliders of the I./LLG 1 and two Go 242A gliders of the I./LLG 2 could be towed from Chabeuil carrying mortar teams and 50 reinforcement *Freiwilliger*, possibly (according to Munoz) the 2. *Kompanie* ('Schwarz') of the 'Legionnaire Bataillon' Brandenburg which included Azerbaijanis, Armenians and Turkistanis. In addition, the gliders carried perhaps 20 French agents from the KDS Lyon, valued for their specialist knowledge of the area and of the Resistance organisation. Other sources suggest that the *Ostruppen* came from the *Ausbildungs* (Training) Btl. 1 of the *Freiwilliger Stamm-Rgt.* 3, the depot formation for Soviet 'volunteers' in Southern France.

One DFS glider came down short of the plateau, brushed the church campanile at Marignac, hit a tree and crashed. Another hit a power line at Vassieux. The pilot, *Uffz* Metzen, three SD Frenchmen and four *Freiwilliger* died in the wreck, while two further DFS 230s, off course for Vassieux, crashed some 40 km further south. One hit a tree near Montjou and was completely destroyed, killing its 11 German and Ukrainian occupants. A second touched down without loss near Teyssieres and its passengers hid until the following morning; then the pilot and another made off but nine Ukrainians surrendered to the FFI and volunteered to fight with them.

A total of 49 aircraft from the *Geschwader Bongart* dropped 10 tonnes of bombs, and 26 others and six fighters from *Jafü Sud* made strafing attacks during the day. Reinforced and re-supplied, the *KGr Schäfer* was able to secure the whole Vassieux area. A *Fi 156* aircraft was thus enabled to land periodically during the afternoon on the road between Vassieux and La Mure to deliver supplies and to fly out *Knab* and other wounded.

During the afternoon of 23 July the Algiers HQ received a number of messages, again asking for an attack on the airfield. *Lt Col* Huet also sent a resume of the situation to London:

"Holding out for 56 hours against three German divisions — have not so far lost an inch of ground. Troops fighting bravely but desperately for they are physically weary and have almost no ammunition. Despite our repeated requests we are alone and have received no aid or support since the start of the fighting. Situation could become desperate from one moment to the next, entailing dreadful miseries on the Vercors Plateau. So far we have done our duty — but we shall be greatly concerned at the extent of the responsibility borne by those far from us who have deliberately involved themselves in a seeming 'adventure'. *Hervieux*".

Perhaps for some of the Staff at Algiers the *Unternehmen Vercors* appeared such a novel adventure, for little heed was paid there to the needs of the Resist-

ance forces, and some senior officers were certainly responsible in part for the problems. At dawn on 24 July *Cpt* Bennes received a signal from *Col* Constans: "Be assured that we shall do everything to help you. Hoping that better weather will allow support and re-supply for you by Allied aircraft" — with much of the massif in German hands, as *Col* Zeller was to tell *Gen* de Gaulle later in the day, this encouraging message was meaningless.

HQ at Algiers at last replied on 24 July to the signals requesting the bombing of Chabeuil: "Allied aircraft have photographed the airfield and have discovered only ten aircraft. We have three different coordinates. Define co-ordinates of the site urgently." In fact, close to the main runway at Chabeuil/La Tresorerie were three satellite strips and a dispersal complex with camouflaged blast pens. In agreement with *Soustelle*, *Grenier* submitted two draft orders, one establishing an air unit to aid the Resistance, a second appointing *Lt Col* Morlaix to its command, but the General appears to have been dissatisfied with the draft orders and returned them for revision; it is possible that he was nervous of the reaction from HQ MAAF and London.

By this time *Huet*'s troops were nearly all committed to positions on the Vercors perimeter. From his small reserve force, three sections of *Cuirassiers* headed for Vassieux early in the afternoon, but they could move only slowly because a spotter plane constantly circled the area. Whenever their movement was sighted, after some 20 minutes they were attacked by a *Rotte* (Section) of *Ariete* fighter bombers, on stand-by at Chabeuil.

While 17 *Fw* 190s of *Jafü-Sud* joined the attack and strafed the French positions on the eastern heights, aircraft under control of *Bongart* (principally the *Do* 17s) dropped arms during the afternoon to the beleaguered troops in the ruins of Vassieux. In the evening they were praised by the German Command for the accuracy of their drops.

The German positions at La Mure were defended by well-sited *MG42*s, so that attacks made by the *Cuirassiers* could not progress across a 100 m wide strip of open grassland, too wide for their *Sten* guns and grenades to be effective. Under frequent attack from the *Re* 2002s, the French retired into woodland from where they kept the airborne troops under rifle fire, forcing them to abandon an observation post in an old windmill tower.

Having committed all his combat-ready troops and realising that they could not hold the enemy at all points, *Huet* ordered the release of prisoners and detainees. Foreseeing an imminent German re-occupation of the Plateau, many of the walking wounded at the *Grotte de la Luire* elected to disperse, 50 patients and 18 staff wisely leaving during the day.

For the rest of the day the FFI positions, along a line 6 km north of *Le Grand Veymont*, were exposed to fire from the mortars and guns of the *KGr* *Schwehr*, and a lorry carrying French reinforcements came under air attack. By late evening all the defenders were short of ammunition and were forced to retreat, those in Northern Vercors to retire to the *Forêt des Coulmes*, those in the



west to the Forêt de Lente and those on the eastern passes to the Forêt de Romeyer and the Montagne de Glandasse, above Die.

Huet's final orders gave his units freedom to disperse and to take individual action. Most of the smaller groups took refuge in the forests, hunted by the enemy and sometimes engaged in brief but deadly skirmishes.

On 24 July, another Go 242B was landed, carrying a 20 mm flak gun which was brought into action as a field piece on the slopes below the Forêt de Lente. Under fire from this gun, within an hour most of the resistants had been driven from their last positions on the Southern Vercors.

On the Col de Rousset, further south, 150 men of the Cuirassiers, awaiting attack from a German motorised column driving up from Die, were threatened from the rear by a detachment from Le Grand Veymont. When they received the order to retreat, they blew up the road tunnel below the Col. In support of the ground troops, 14 aircraft carried out bombing attacks, and the German Command claimed another 40 resistants killed.

German mountain troops who had crossed the Pas de la Ville earlier in the day reached St. Martin and St. Agnan without opposition. After St. Julien-en-Quint was secured by the KGr Zaber, refugees from Vassieux began making their way back, to find their homes looted or destroyed, their families and neighbours dead.

During the afternoon, 60 escorted B-24s of the US Fifteenth Air Force raided the airfield of Chabeuil-La Tresorerie, too late to benefit the patriots. Exaggerated claims were made that 30 German aircraft had been destroyed, but only two Re 2002s of the Geschwader Bongart and two Ju 88s were completely destroyed, several other aircraft badly damaged. Eighteen Fw 190 fighters of Jafü-Sud were scrambled to intercept the raid; claiming three American aircraft shot down for the loss of two German fighters.

During the day, Geschwader Bongart made another 25 bombing and strafing attacks on the dispersed French forces and, perhaps including the Ju 52s, seven aircraft were employed on supply and liaison duties with the 7./KG 200. Their duties having ended in success, the flying personnel and aircraft of the Geschwader Bongart were returned to airfields west of the Rhône and to Lyon-Bron for further anti-partisan operations.

The mountain-infantry arriving from the Passes and the Osttruppen set down by glider two days before at Vassieux reached La Chapelle-en-Vercors at 13.00 hrs. They encountered no resistance but damaged and pillaged some of the buildings of neighbouring farms. At La Chapelle, the officer in command of the fresh Freiwilliger, a unit apparently called after him as Oberland (as was usually the case with ad-hoc formations of the German Army) called for the mayor and Curé to assemble the population in the little village square while the Osttruppen carried on with combing the area. During the evening the people were divided into three groups; men between the ages of 16 and 40, men over 40 and the women and children. These last two groups were housed temporarily in the school and the young men were taken

as hostages, each of them callously shot by the officer in command with a pistol.

David Littlejohn, in *Foreign Legions of the Third Reich*, and E.H. Crookshank in *Gehlen*, wrote of the formation in 1941 of a Sonderverband 'Bergmann' (Miner) recruited in the East from Georgian, Armenian, Azerbaijani and Caucasian prisoners-of-war. The Verband was soon enlarged to become an infantry battalion; three Georgian, one Azerbaijani and one Armenian company under a *Hptm* Theodor Oberlander. He disagreed on matters of policy with his superiors, so that *Reichskommissar* Koch used his personal influence with Hitler to have Oberlander removed from his command and discharged from the Army.

Later in the war, his talents were again recognised and he was re-enlisted, this time 'to work with Caucasian Freiwilliger within the Luftwaffe'. The author strongly believes that Oberlander was responsible for the brutal shooting of hostages at La Chapelle.

The move of the wounded to the Grotte de la Luire was revealed to the Germans the next day. The first troops of the 157 Inf-Div reached the cave at 1630. Although a large Red Cross flag was laid out by the entrance, they took all the walking wounded and set them on the track to Rousset with the medical staff. Dr Ganimede later told how they met another enemy group: "...probably the parachutists coming from Vassieux". These men turned around the cart accompanying the wounded back towards the Grotte. The rest of the injured were driven on to Rousset where one of the wounded, a Senegalese named Ben Ahmed, shouted, "Sale Boche" — "filthy Germans". The escort hanged him. The badly wounded in the cave were carried out and thrown to the ground some 100 metres below, being mutilated and killed, 17 in all.

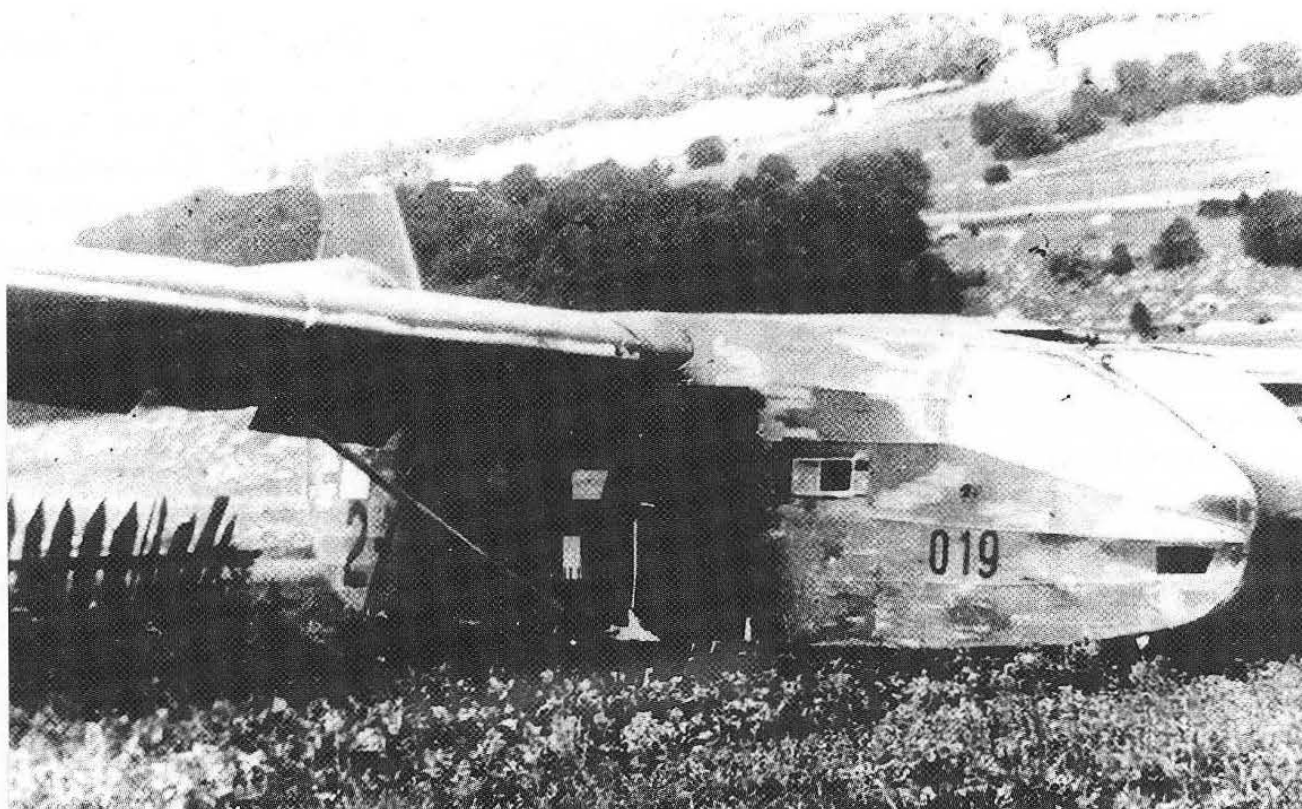
Clearly those responsible for these atrocities were not men of the KGr Schäfer, who had left Grenoble earlier that day. The local people, of course, saw no difference between the Fallschirmjäger and the Osttruppen who also wore parachutists' kit, unlike their fellow Freiwilliger of Azerbaijani and Turkestani units engaged at St. Nizier on 15 June. These air-landed soldiers were most likely from a Ukrainian unit but there can no longer be any certainty of their origins, nor if they were from Oberlander's command. A party returned the following day and buried the victims in a common grave.

During the morning of 25 July, the glider-pilots and the men of the KGr Schäfer headed for La Chapelle, on their way by road to Grenoble, having wrapped their dead in tent-canvas to preserve them from the heat of the day. The gliders were abandoned and set on fire.

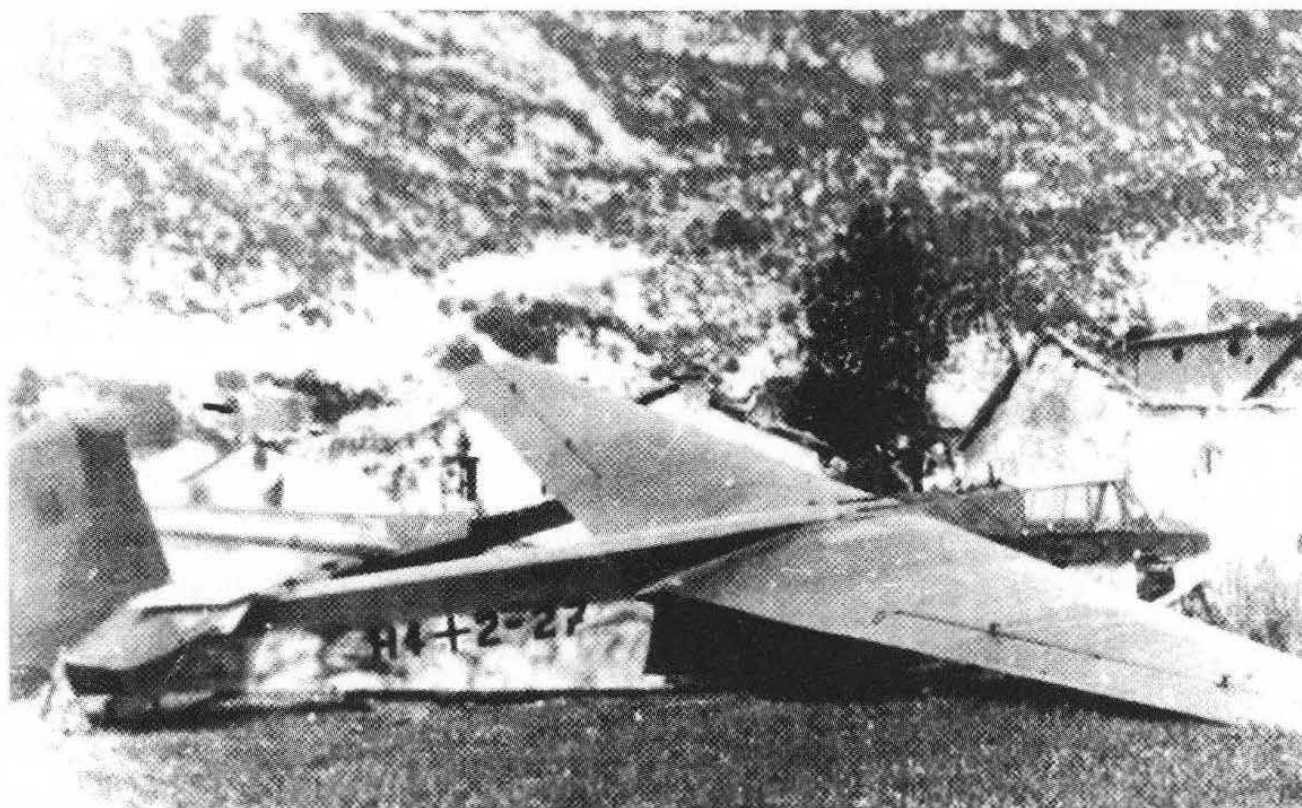
Gebirgsjäger who took over from the 7./KG 200 were amazed to see the devastation caused at Vassieux by the aerial bombardment and the fighting. A Fi 156 was flown in from Lyon to establish if the ground was suitable to take transport aircraft and, during the afternoon, two Ju 52s arrived to begin loading the dead. The few remaining Fallschirmjäger and their booty were flown out by these aircraft. During the day the Geschwader Bongart made another 25 bombing and strafing attacks on the dis-



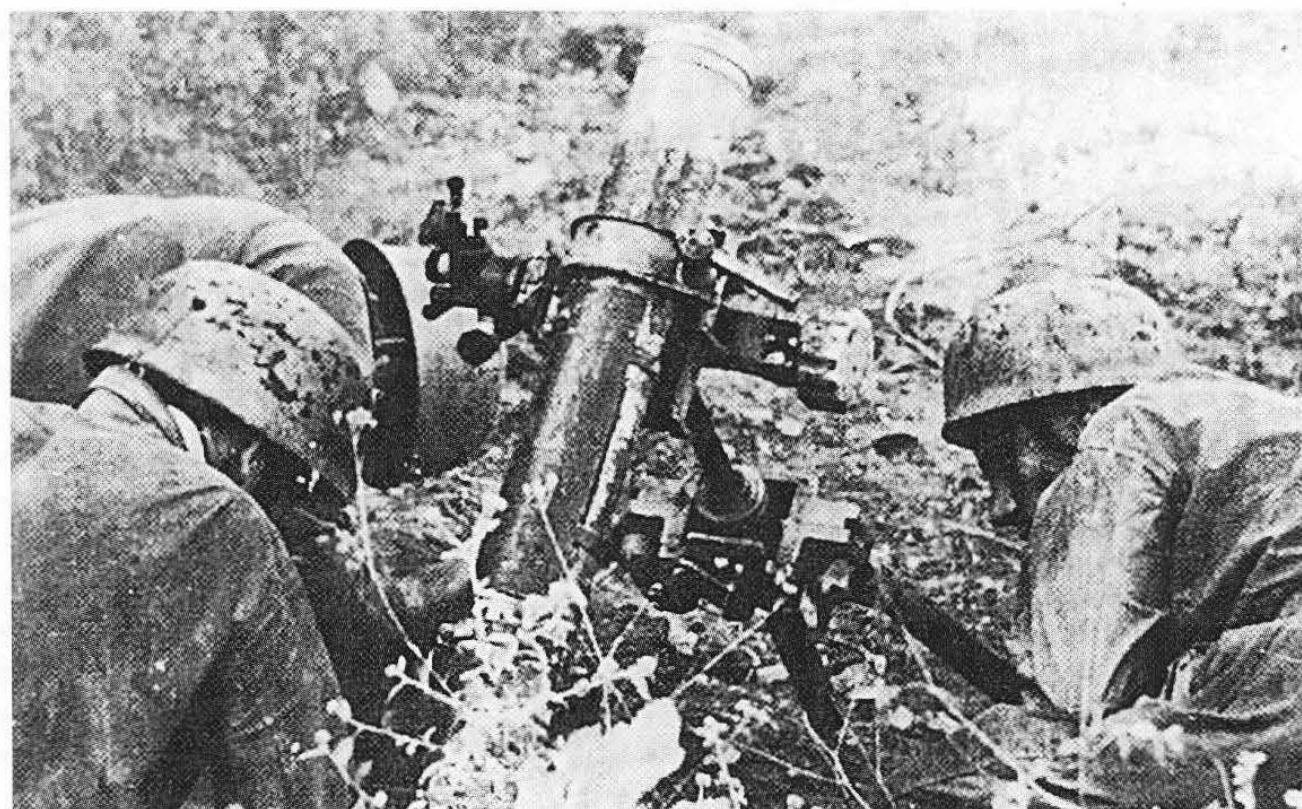
**146:** One of the two Go 242 transport gliders which landed on the edge of the village of Vassieux. It has apparently gone straight through the fence



**147:** Here a DFS 230 of 2./LLG 1 has also landed on the outskirts of Vassieux-en-Vercors. These were pinpoint landings among the defenders



**148:** Once out the gliders and deployed under cover, the Fallschirmjäger were able to bring their heavier weapons, such as this 81mm mortar into action. Had the defenders at Vassieux had such weapons available, the paratroopers might well have been overcome





persed French forces and, perhaps including the Ju 52s, seven aircraft were employed on supply and liaison duties with the 7./KG 200. Their duties having ended in success, the personnel and aircraft of the Geschwader Bongart were returned to airfields west of the Rhone and to Lyon-Bron.

German losses during the Operation VERCORS are recorded as 'about 100' killed in action and 56 who died from their wounds. Of the Resistance, 693 fighters and 201 civilians were killed during the German attack and its aftermath. From Lyon, the men of the II./KG 200 were moved to Nancy by train, their journey apparently taking nearly three weeks because of the disruption of the railway system by bombing and sabotage.

The Fallschirmjäger were prepared for further action but the 'special duties' supposedly planned for them were abandoned. Heavy attacks by aircraft of the IX. Fliegerkorps had failed to destroy the Selune River bridge near Avranches, captured intact by Gen Bradley's US First Army at the end of July; over this bridge, Gen Patton's Third Army broke out from the Cotentin on 1 August and headed into Brittany. It seems that when it was proposed that the KGr Schäfer make an attempt to destroy the bridge, the Oberkommando der Luftwaffe forbade the attack. The men of the KG 200 were withdrawn to Meaux where they were joined by Heigl and Stormer when the French 2nd Armoured Division approached the capital. At Meaux, Schäfer assured the Geschwader-Kommodore that his men had taken no part in the atrocities committed on the Plateau.

So far, some confirmation exists as to the movement and activities of the KGr Schäfer, but for a brief period in August there are no reliable records. All we have is the report of interrogation (unconfirmed in its detail) of the ex-pilot of the 6./KG 200 whose willingly-given information is, to say the least, of doubtful reliability. Certainly the Kampfgruppe remained for a short time at the disposal of Luftflotte 3 for special duties but not for any 'suicide operations'; *Oberst* Heigl must have made sure of that. According to the POW, later in August, at about the time the 6./KG 200 was declared non-operational, it was proposed that the Fallschirmjäger take a major part in another attack. This was to be an airborne landing to retake the airfields at Istres, Bouches-du Rhone, when re-occupied by French-American forces after the DRAGOON landings on the Cote d'Azur. The operation, it was reported, was cancelled because the paratroops were to be transported in captured American aircraft, to reduce suspicion on their approach, yet there were too few of these aircraft available from the 3./KG 200; six B-17s (only one serviceable) and one B-24, at short notice.

The remainder of the 6. Staffel and the men of the 7./KG 200 were then, so it was said, moved to Reims where 17 men were killed when an accidental explosion destroyed much of their equipment. Once again, no more names appear in the III./KG 200 casualty list.

The loss of Luftwaffe airfields on both Eastern and Western Fronts, and the reduction in air operations consequent upon the desperate shortage of fuel caused by

the Allied air offensive, made many aircrew and ground-staff redundant. Most were simply allocated to defence duties. Others, including some from the Stab and I./LLG 1 and I./LLG 2, which were disbanded on 9 September, and from KG 200, were posted to the Haupt-Untersuchungs Stelle (Main Research Centre) of the X. Fliegerkorps at Gardelegen, near Magdeburg. There they were incorporated into new units, each with a cadre of experienced parachutists, and sent into action. At the end of the month the 7./KG 200 was also disbanded. Schäfer was promoted to *Major* and awarded the Ritterkreuz for leadership of his Kampfgruppe at Vassieux. He was appointed Kommandeur of the III./FJ-Regt zbV, a new 'Bataillon Schäfer', in January 1945.

A group of resistants came out of hiding at Glovins, near St Julien-en-Quint, and headed for Vassieux, finding the ruins deserted on 3 August. The scattered units of the Resistance du Vercors immediately began making contact with Huet's headquarters. As he reassembled his forces, he recorded that the Germans had abandoned their search for his headquarters. On the 7th, he ordered his dispersed units to form teams of 25 to 30 men for surprise attacks and ambush as opportunities occurred.

On 11 August, the Prefect of the Drome at Valence and the Red Cross at Dic organised a team which spent three days collecting and burying those who had died around Vassieux. As the survivors of the population returned to their hamlets and discovered atrocities, the FFI units began burying the dead of the devastated farms and uncovered caches of arms concealed in the Forêt de Lente; there they found bodies hanged head-down and mutilated. By this time most of the German troops had withdrawn from the Plateau, removing most of the livestock — some 3,000 cattle, 1,300 pigs and 300 horses — besides great quantities of provisions, leaving the populace to face the bitter winter of 1944-45.

Major Cammaerts, SOE's co-ordinator, was awaiting Operation DRAGOON. On 12 August, he and SOE officers Fielding, Sorenson and Claude Renoir were arrested and taken by the SIPO to Digne in Basses Alpes. Renoir was released and, on hearing of the arrests, SOE agent Krystina Skarbek negotiated the release of the three detained prisoners for two million francs. An urgent message to Algiers brought about a drop of the 'ransom' during the night of 14/15 August — this was recorded as the quickest reply to a request for an air drop into southern France. The prisoners were released on the 16th, a day after DRAGOON was launched. *Gen* Blaskowitz's Army Group G had by this time lost much of its 1. Armee to the fighting in the north, other units were deployed to combat the Resistance, and *Gen* Weise's 19. Armee was reduced to seven divisions for defence of the French Mediterranean coast. Within three days *Gen* Patch's US 7th Army was ashore to take control of the Cote d'Azur and its hinterland. French Army B under *Gen* Jean de Lattre de Tassigny advanced rapidly west towards Marseille and Toulon while, with support from the FFI as originally foreseen, American infantry and armour headed north-west for the Val d'Isere.



In Southern France, French and US forces had advanced northwards up the valley of the Durance; on 20 August all troops of the German Army Group G (except those of the 19. Armee in the Rhône Valley) were ordered to withdraw to the line Seine-Yonne-Dijon-Dole-Swiss frontier.

The Do 17E tow aircraft of the I./LLG 1 were flown to their base at Strasbourg-Entzheim and, as German forces withdrew from France, on 1 September to the airfield at Giessen near Frankfurt-am-Main; there some 20 aircraft were destroyed by an American strafing attack, (so it was said).

Schäfer's men, called KGr/KG 200, were withdrawn briefly to Koblenz to re-equip before returning to action as infantry at Arlon in Belgium. There they 'stiffened the resistance' of units badly mauled during the retreat from France and, after the fall of Metz to the US Third Army, they acted as rearguard. The KGr Schäfer, subordinated to OB Niederlande, fought in the Arnhem area before retreating into Germany, there to surrender to British troops near Oldenburg, 40 km from Bremen.

Michael Pearson (author of *Tears of Glory*, Macmillan, London, 1978) wrote of "the fundamental error of attempting conventional combat in a guerrilla setting" but there was no hint of any such error by Huet's Staff, who never envisaged prolonged defence of the Plateau. That MONTAGNARDS was feasible, given air support, may be assumed from the success of operations in Burma where, in March 1944, Gen Wingate's Special Force set up 'strongholds' behind the Japanese lines, holding these positions for two months as bases for roving attacks on the enemy's lines of communication. It would be foolish to speculate on the possible success of a landing at Taille-Crayon by Allied airborne troops. In the event, the strength of the German forces investing the Plateau and the timing of the operation ensured that the Resistance could hold out only for a few days, yet that was all that had been intended.

The most remarkable part of the operation, the brilliantly executed glider-borne attack at Vassieux, failed in its primary purpose of destroying the Vercors HQ, and the situation of the KGr Schäfer seemed desperate until arms and reinforcements were flown in. The Fallschirmjäger perhaps survived only because of the Resistance's lack of heavy infantry weapons and the delay by the HQ Mediterranean Allied Air Forces in responding to the repeated requests from Algiers for air support and bombing of Chabeuil. No sound explanation has been given for the failure to act promptly during the two critical days when the KGr Schäfer was beleaguered in Vassieux.

Was the Unternehmen VERCORS a success for the Germans? Historians have since considered it a defeat for the valiant but poorly-led Resistance and Pflaum and OB-West undoubtedly so believed when the maquisards appeared to have been dispersed. The cost to the civil population was great, the ensuing sweep produced great rewards in provisions for the German Army but, after the 157 Res. Inf. Div withdrew from the Plateau, on 17 August Lt.Col Huet, his Staff still intact, re-assembled his men in groups to move against Grenoble, Valence and Vienne. They re-occupied Romans-sur-Isère on 21 August, Grenoble the next day, and a detachment reached Lyon as the Germans abandoned their HQ in the city a day later. The groups were incorporated in the French Army and fought on to help drive Heeresgruppe G back to the German frontier.

**149:** Supply containers being dropped from US B-17s, as seen from the drop zone at 'Taille-Crayon'







**150:** At Les Barraques-en-Vercors, a demonstration of firing a bazooka by Capt Tupper's OSS 'half-commando' group, watched by Lt Col Huet, on the right



**151:** Positions such as this 'belvedere' held by the FFI near Valchevrière were impossible to defend with only grenades and machine-carbines



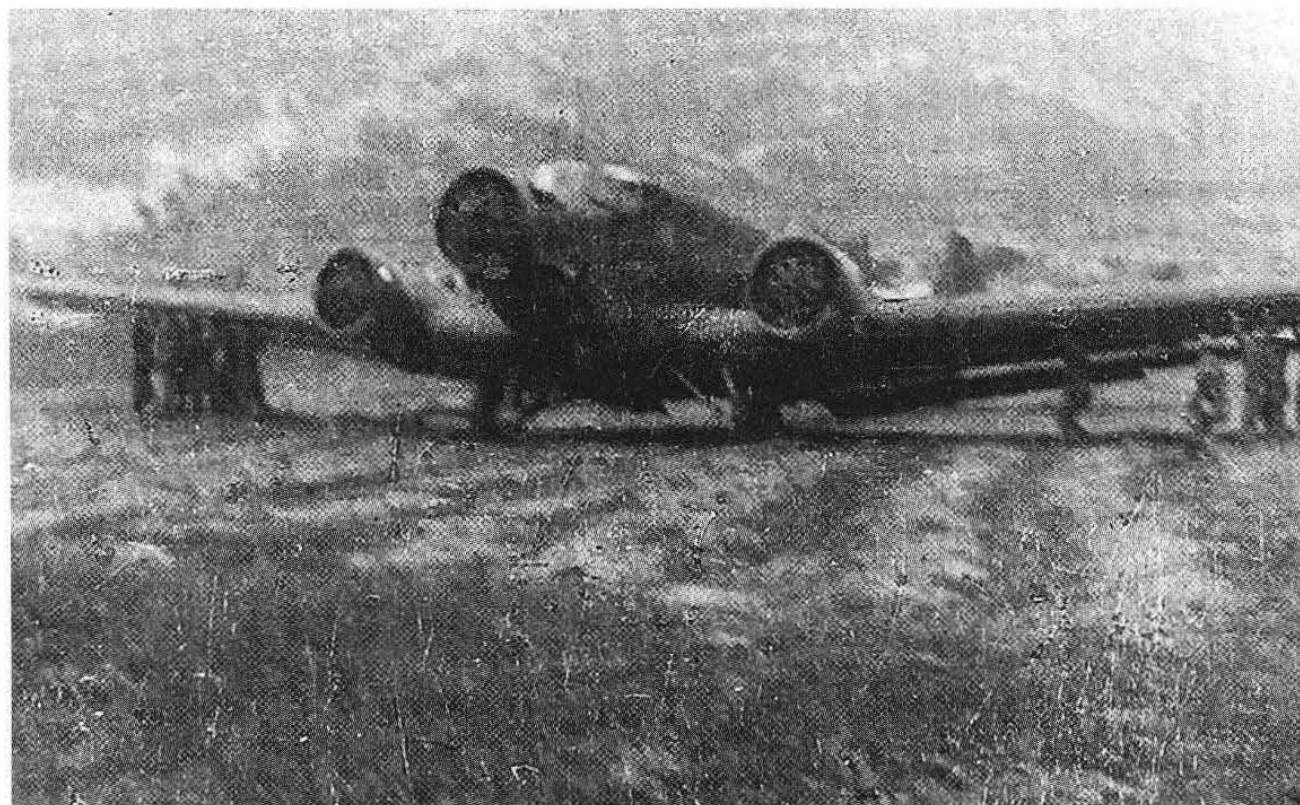
**152:** The Grotte de la Luire; in the cave-mouth a temporary hospital was set up to treat resistants, civilians and enemy wounded, these last given dedicated care



**153:** A few German prisoners and French collaborators gathered beside the fountain in the square at La Chapelle-en-Vercors, shortly before being released, perhaps unwisely, if honourably, by Lt Col Huet on 24 July



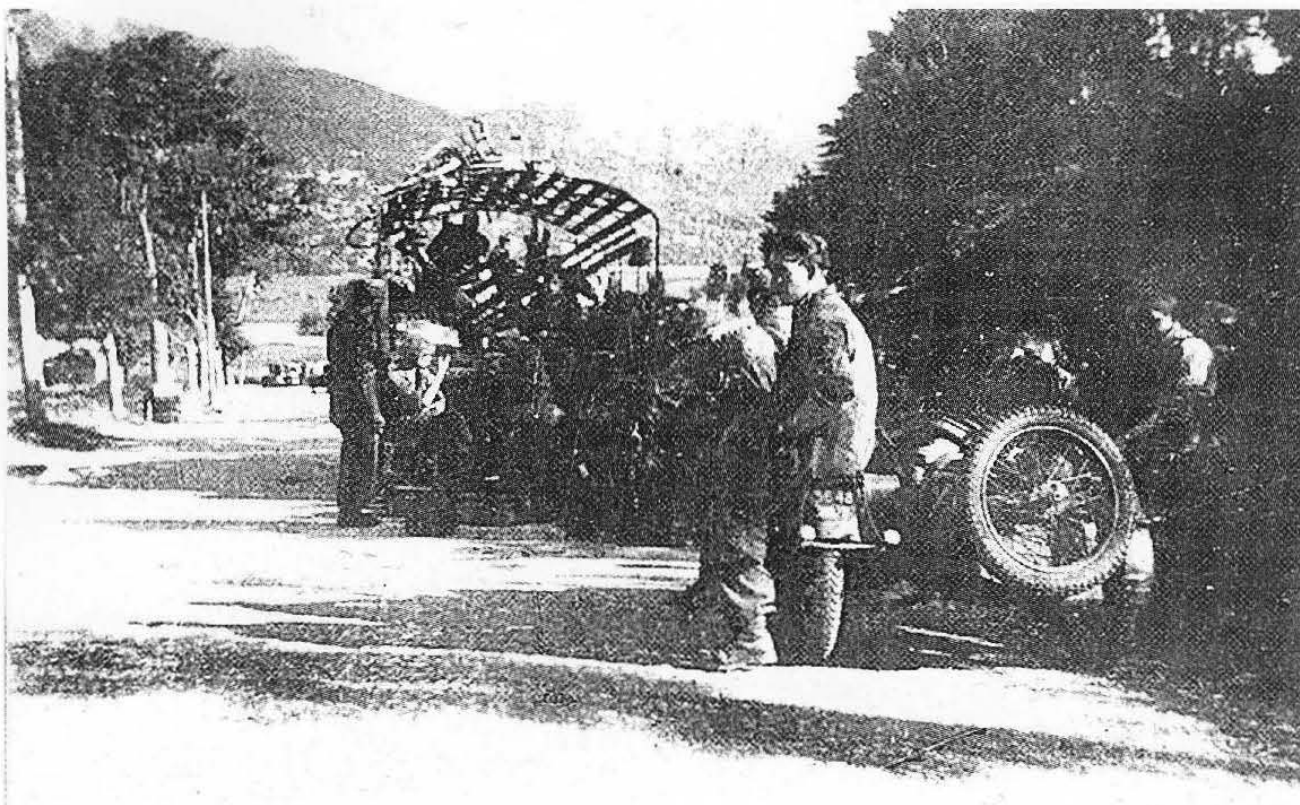
**154:** Fallschirmjäger providing assistance to a Junkers Ju 52/3m transport aircraft by the Vassieux-La Chapelle road on 24 July 1944



**155:** The ruins of La Chapelle after air attack and sacking by mountain infantry of the KGr Schwehr



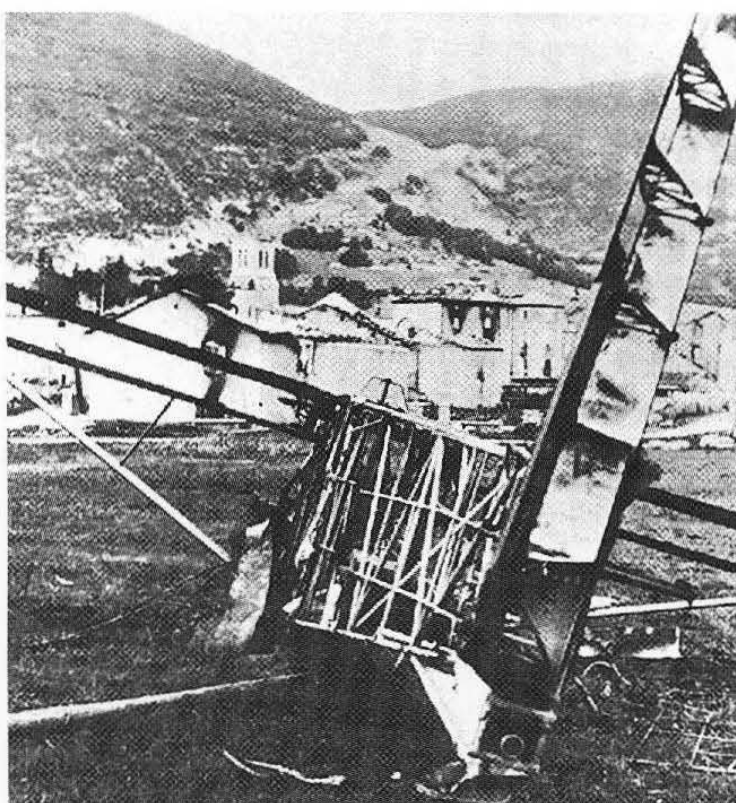




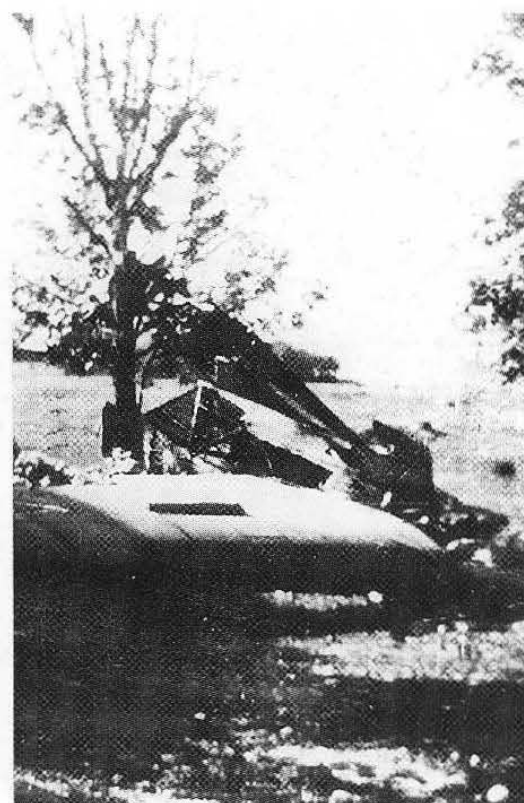
**156:** After their successful action at Vassieux, men of the 7./KG 200 load vehicles with their arms and booty before leaving for Grenoble on 25 July



**157:** Collateral damage. A Fallschirmjäger (left background) views villagers shot down in the ruins of Vassieux



**158 Far left:** A DFS glider burned by the Germans before they evacuated Vassieux in August



**159 Left:** This glider was reduced to wreckage when it crashed on landing. It appears to be a DFS 230 with the long side windows visible in the centre





**160 Above:** It seems that the larger Go 242 gliders were dismantled and evacuated by road for re-use. Although seen in France, this one wears a Russian Front yellow fuselage band

**161 Right:** A starboard side view of the same Re 2002 shown in photo 127, as it was first found abandoned at Lyons-Bron after German forces had withdrawn. The wreck of another ex-Geschwader Bongart machine can be seen behind



**162:** Curious locals help themselves to souvenirs from the wreck of Re 2002 'Black 2'. The fuselage of one such aircraft still survives as a monument to the Resistance in the area







## A NEW BROOM

### Baumbach takes command

In October 1944, it was decided to undertake a major re-organisation of KG 200. Whereas smaller flying units had been simply subordinated to KG 200 for particular operations or series of operations, they were now to be fully incorporated in the Geschwader. The original principle that required 'special formations' to be responsible to the Obersbefehlshaber was maintained, but Luftgaukommando III was to be the controlling body. There may have been advantages in the changed system, particularly as regards the supply of that all-important but diminishing asset, fuel.

With the support of her contacts in high places Hanna Reitsch manoeuvred *Oberst* Heigl from his position, to be given command of a Fallschirmjäger-Bataillon in East Prussia. His place was taken as Geschwader-Kommandore

by the Luftwaffe's best-known and successful bomber commander, who had a good relationship with both Göring and Hitler, *Oberstleutnant* Werner Baumbach.

Baumbach brought with him as Operations Officer a *Maj* Adolf von Harnier, but *Maj* Randel-Semper remained on the Stab to act as liaison officer with the Intelligence Services. *Maj* Helmut Viedebannt was appointed Kommandeur III./KG 200.

**163 Above:** Werner Baumbach was a Luftwaffe hero long before he joined KG 200. This picture is taken from the front cover of the Luftwaffe magazine *Der Adler* (The Eagle) of 25 March 1941, when Baumbach was just a lowly *Oberleutnant*. He had a highly successful career as a bomber pilot but was removed from command of I./KG 30 in 1942 when he protested about the incompetence of one of Göring's World War I cronies, Bruno Loerzer



# ORGANISATION OF KG 200





# ORGANISATION OF KG 200

6 NOVEMBER 1944

## GESCHWADER STAB

Gatow (moved to Boitzenburg beginning December)

### I GRUPPE STAB

### II GRUPPE STAB

1. STAFFEL	2. STAFFEL	3. STAFFEL	4. STAFFEL	5. STAFFEL	6. STAFFEL	7. STAFFEL	8. STAFFEL
Finow	Grieslienen	Bug-am-R gen	(W as 3./KG 200)	Burg	Burg	Kolberg	Industriestaffel
Long-range	Short-range	See	Training & Replacements additionally	Beleuchter	Mistel	Training & Replacements	
<i>B-17, B-24, Ju 290, Ju 252</i>	<i>He 111</i>	<i>Do 24</i>		<i>Ju 88</i>	<i>Bf 109</i>		
Kdo Carmen (Bergamo) <i>Ju 188</i> Kdo Clara (Wiener-Neustadt) <i>Ju 188</i> <i>All types used by KG 200</i>							

Was III./KG 66

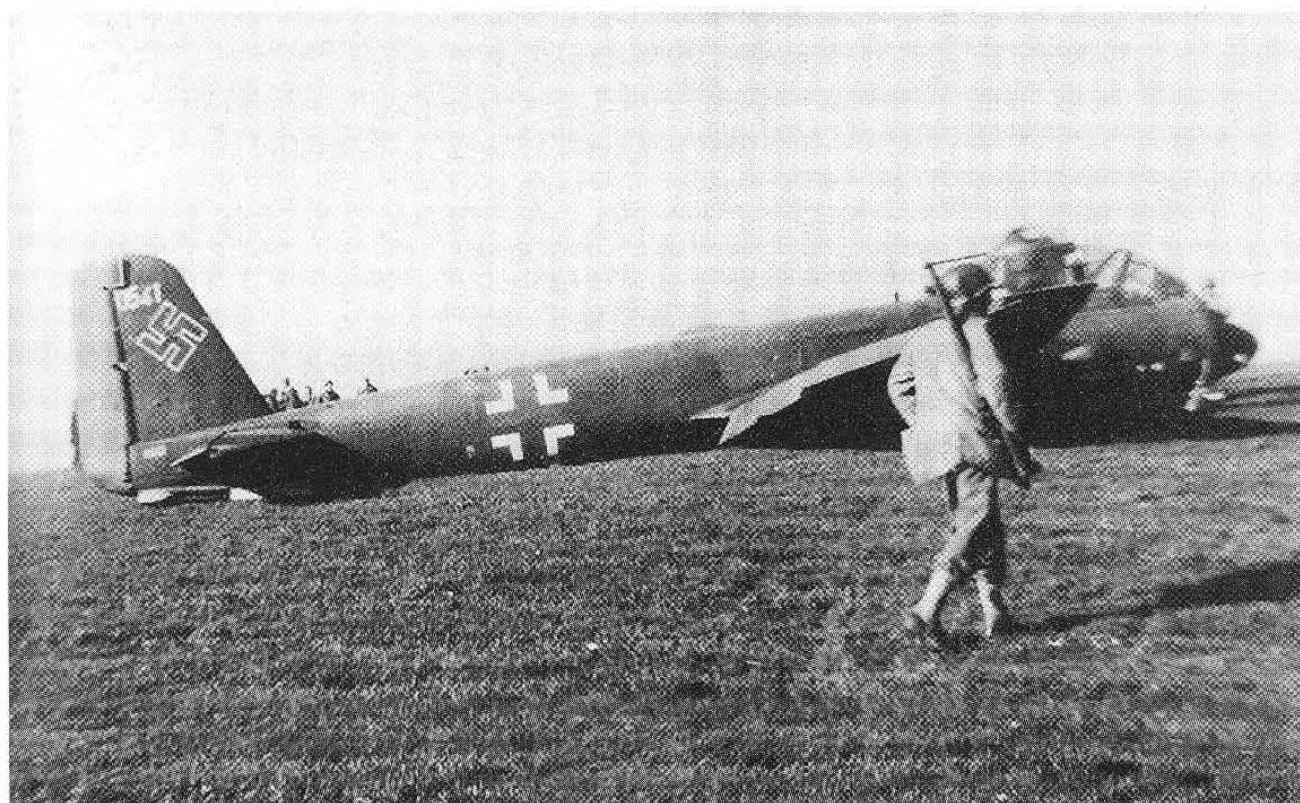
### III GRUPPE STAB

### IV GRUPPE STAB

### VERSUCHS KDO KG 200

Garz (From E.Kdo 36)

9, 10, 11 STAFFEL	13. STAFFEL	14. STAFFEL	15. STAFFEL	16. STAFFEL
(From 8/1/45. I./SG 5 as Stab III./ & 9, 10, 11./KG 200)	Villafranca (Was 2./KG 200. To III./KG 200 from 8/1/45)	Dedelsdorf (Was 2 & 4./KG 200)	(Was glider-towing Staffel II./LLG 1) <i>He 111Z, Ju 52, Go 242</i>	Munich-Vienna (Was 4./KG 200)
	Einhorn <i>Fw 190 (BT)</i>	Training & Replacements <i>All types used by KG 200</i>		Replacements



**165:** By late 1944 a great number of KG 200's 'routine' missions were being carried out by the trusty Ju 188, as can be seen from the number of such aircraft which figure in the loss lists. This is Ju 188D-2 W.Nr. 0541 (260541?) which was apparently shot down by US forces in Luxembourg on 29 October 1944. To which unit it belonged to is not known but its anonymous finish is typical of most of KG 200's aircraft. Certainly, the next aircraft off the production line, W.Nr. 260542, coded A3+QD, was lost over Belgium on 23 January 1945 while in service with 4./KG 200



The 1. Staffel continued to provide the Kommandos with an assortment of more than 50 aircraft for agent and supply-dropping, each outstation operating up to nine or ten aircraft. Besides supplying reinforcements, the 3./KG 200 provided a major transport facility with Ju 290s based at Stolp-Reitz in north-eastern Germany. The Kommandos in the West and South were nominally subordinated to Luftflotte Reich, those in the East were administratively part of *Gen Ritter von Greim's* Luftflotte 6, all receiving orders through the Stab/KG 200 from 'Robinson'.

After re-organisation of the Geschwader on 6 November, this formation became responsible once again for the operation of all 'special weapons':

Stab/KG 200 from Finow to Boitzenburg: *Oberstlt Baumbach*

Stab I./KG 200 — unchanged: *Maj Adolf Koch*

Stab II./KG 200 — not decided / in abeyance

5.Staffel — from the 7./KG 66, 'illuminators'

6.Staffel — from the 8./KG 66, Mistel operations

7.Staffel — from the 9./KG 66, training and replacement for Mistel

Stab III./KG 200 — to be formed: *Maj Helmut Viedebannt*

9.Staffel — from the 1./SG 5

10.Staffel — from the 2./SG 5

11.Staffel — from the 3./SG 5

Stab IV./KG 200 — *Maj Günter Hurlin*

13.Staffel — 'Sonderverband Einhorn', earlier replacement Staffel for the III./KG 200

14.Staffel — 'Leonidas Staffel', the SO-Men, earlier the 2./II. KG 200

15.Staffel — Glider-tugs

16.Staffel — from remainder of earlier II./KG 200 as replacement Staffel

Lehr-und Versuchs-Kdo 36 became Versuchs-Kdo KG 200.

Versuchs-Kdo became Versuchs-Kdo OKL.

The Vers.Verb.Ob.d.L. held on charge a surprising number of aircraft, a result of its duty of testing all types. The separation of functions that followed with the formation of the 'Geheim Geschwader' in February 1944 meant that this unit had no responsibility for the 'Zirkus

Rosarius', as can be seen from the Order of Battle of the Versuchsverband (26 aircraft) and that of KG 200 (40 aircraft, 14 gliders).

After further reorganisation on 6 November 1944, the number of aircraft held by both units had increased in number, the Versuchsverband with 59 and KG 200 with 221 aircraft on charge (the latter including those of several incorporated units into the IV Gruppe). In both cases, only half the total were serviceable at any one time, although the Geschwader operated 47 types of aircraft between the dates of formation and disbandment; March 1944 to April 1945. It seems that the use of the smaller multi-purpose aircraft was restricted to their limited carrying capacity as well as by the lack of aviation spirit and, perhaps, by the constant need for maintenance of the two-



**166 Above right:** A smiling Hptm Werner Baumbach in a formal portrait shortly after he had been awarded the Oakleaves

**167 Right:** This B-17F-5-VE is 42-5714, Old Faithful, of the 323rd Bomb Squadron, 91st Bomb Group, went missing on 14 October 1943. Here coded DR+PE, it is not certain if it ever went to KG 200, but its pristine condition suggests that it may well have done so later in its career





## Commanding Officers of KG 200

### Stab/Geschwaderkommodore:

<i>Oberst</i> Heinrich Heigl	21/2/44 - 15/11/44
<i>Obstlt</i> Werner Baumbach	15/11/44 - 4/45
<i>Maj</i> Adolf von Harnier	4/45 - 5/45

### Stab I./KG 200 Gruppenkommandeur:

<i>Maj</i> Eduard Gartenfeld	21/2/44 - 19/4/44
<i>Maj</i> Adolf Koch	19/4/44 - 4/45

### 1./KG 200 Staffelkapitän:

<i>Hptm</i> Heinz Braun	21/2/44 - 8/5/45
<i>Hptm</i> Gerhard Wasserkampf	21/2/45 - 5/45

### 2./KG 200 Staffelkapitän:

<i>Oblt</i> Fritz Reese	21/2/44 - 2/11/44
<i>Hptm</i> Rudolf Noderer	1/145 - 8/5/45

### 3./KG 200 Staffelkapitän:

<i>Maj</i> Theodor Queens	15/4/44 - 15/10/44
<i>Hptm</i> Willy Warler	25/8/44 - 24/3/45

### 4./KG 200 Staffelkapitän:

<i>Oblt</i> Horst Dümcke	5/44 - 19/9/44
<i>Oblt</i> Peter Stahl	11/44 - 8/5/45

### Stab II./KG 200 Gruppenkommandeur:

<i>Maj</i> Hans Jungwirth	21/2/44 - 11/7/44
<i>Maj</i> Günter Hurlin	11/7/44 - 20/11/44

### 1 (II)./KG 200 Staffelkapitän:

<i>Hptm</i> Friedrich Schäfer	21/2/44 - 8/6/44
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### 2 (II)./KG 200 Staffelkapitän:

<i>Oblt</i> H. Lange	21/2/44 - 8/44
<i>Hptm</i> Raschke?	8/44 - 20/11/44

### 3 (II)./KG 200 Staffelkapitän:

<i>Oblt</i> Kempe?	21/2/44 - 8/6/44
<i>Hptm</i> Friedrich Schäfer	8/6/44 - 9/10/44

### 4 (II)./KG 200 (Erg. Staffel) Staffelkapitän:

<i>Hptm</i> Robert Schuntermann	15/10/44 - 27/11/44
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### After reorganisation of November 1944:

### Stab II./KG 200 Gruppenkommandeur:

<i>Hptm</i> Kurt Capesius	20/11/44 - 28/3/45
<i>Hptm</i> Horst Rudat	28/3/45 - 8/5/45

### 5./KG 200 Staffelkapitän:

<i>Oblt</i> Alfred Pils	20/11/44 - 5/45
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### 6./KG 200 Staffelkapitän:

<i>Lt</i> Henning von Rom	15/10/44 - 24/3/45
<i>Oblt</i> Balduin Pauli	20/11/44 - 4/45
<i>Oblt</i> Friedrich Droste	4/45 - 8/5/45

### 7./KG 200 Staffelkapitän:

<i>Oblt</i> Josef Czech	23/7/44 - 14/1/45
<i>Hptm</i> Horst Rudat	11/44 - 4/45

### Stab III./KG 200 Gruppenkommandeur:

<i>Maj</i> Helmut Viedebant	20/11/44 - 11/2/45
<i>Hptm</i> Erwin Diekwisch	3/4/45 - 8/5/45

### 11./KG 200 Staffelkapitän:

<i>Hptm</i> Erwin Diekwisch	20/11/44 - 3/4/45
<i>Lt</i> Herbert Dadewit	3/4/45 - 8/5/45

### Stab IV./KG 200 Gruppenkommandeur:

<i>Maj</i> Günter Hurlin	20/11/44 - 11/2/45
<i>Maj</i> Gottfried Kuschke	11/2/45 - 22/4/45

### 13./KG 200 Staffelkapitän:

<i>Hptm</i> Robert Schuntermann	12/44 - 1/45
<i>Hptm</i> Hans Sturm	4/1/45 - 22/4/45

### 14./KG 200 Staffelkapitän:

<i>Oblt</i> Friedrich Droste	?/45 - 22/4/45
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### 15./KG 200 Staffelkapitän:

<i>Hptm</i> Raschke?	20/11/44 - ?/?/45
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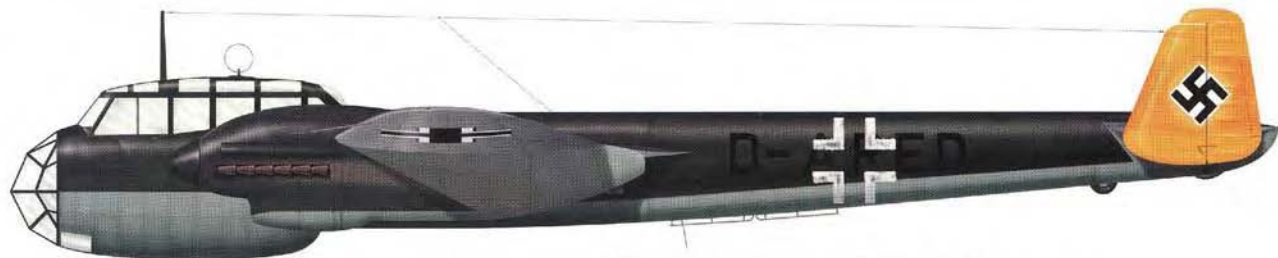
1: The Heinkel He 111V4, W.Nr. 1968, D-AHAO, Dresden, while in use by the RLM special duties flight under Theodor Rowehl between 1936-1938. Finish is standard Lufthansa silver and black with appropriate national insignia of the period. Source: Photos



2: Heinkel He 111P (or II), D-ADAG, also in service with the 'Kommando Rowehl' for overflights of the Soviet Union in 1940-1941. Despite the civilian registration the aircraft is in full 70/71/65 military camouflage with what appears to be a crudely applied layer of temporary Black 22 on the upper surfaces. Source: Photos

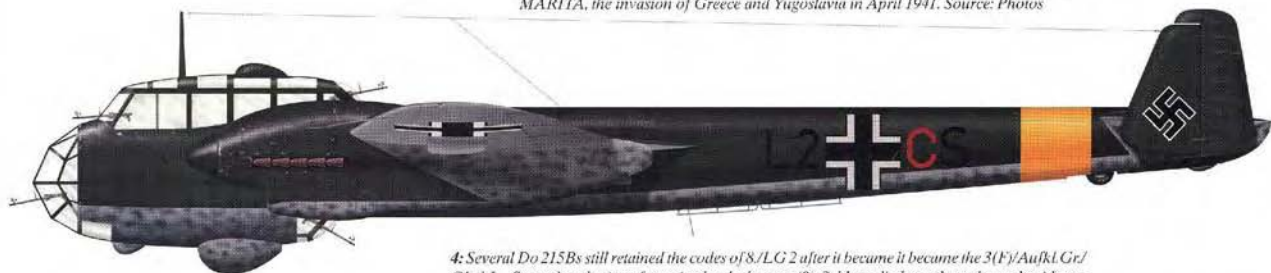


1/72 SCALE



3: D-ARED is believed to be one of the three special Dornier Do 17Ss built for Kommando Rowehl. Balkenkreuze and yellow paint on the tail and, presumably, engine cowlings, have been crudely applied over the standard camouflage and civil registration during Operation MARITA, the invasion of Greece and Yugoslavia in April 1941. Source: Photos

CAMOUFLAGE &amp; MARKINGS



4: Several Do 215Bs still retained the codes of 8/LG 2 after it became the 3(F)/Aufkl.Gr./Ob.d.L.. Several such aircraft received a dark green(?) field-applied mottle to the undersides as shown here. Source: Photos



5: Although at least one Do 217A-0 found its way to Kommando Rowehl, no markings are known for certain. Reconstruction





6: Junkers Ju 86R-1 W.Nr. 0454, T5+RM, of the Aufkl.Gr.(F)/Ob.d.L. at Dessau in November 1942. Finish is believed to be overall RLM 02. The aircraft was later re-coded T5+VH. Source: Photos



7: Junkers Ju 88B-0, K9+RH, of the VjH, Oranienburg. Reconstruction



8: Dornier Do 335V3, W.Nr. 230003, wearing the Versuchsverband/Ob.d.L. codes, T9-ZH. Rechlin, April 1944. Finish is 70/71/65. Source: Photos

1/72 SCALE



1/96 SCALE



**9:** *Arado Ar 232A-06, W.Nr. 10008, still wearing the codes of TG 5, G6+VY, it was lost in service with 2./KG 200 on 14 December 1944. Finish is 70/71/65. Source: Photo*

**10:** *The Ar 232B-07, W.Nr. 110029, with the KG 200 code A3+RB. Apart from some minor overpainting it still looked the same at Farnborough, post-war. Finish is 70/71/65 with vestiges of a squiggle of light grey or white, probably a souvenir from RENNSTRECKE winter operations; Source: Photos*



CAMOUFLAGE &amp; MARKINGS





*11: A Gotha Go 242, in typical glider finish, which still retains yellow Eastern Front tactical markings. It is believed that this aircraft took part in the Vercors operation. Source: Photo*

*12: Heinkel He 111H-6(?), A3+HC, of 2/KG 200, in typical nondescript markings of the unit. This aircraft was flown by Karl Heinz Lange from Stolp/Reitz. It was noted at Gatow on 20 April 1945 and may be the same aircraft which was discovered at Prague-Ruzyně in May. Source: Photo*



1/72 SCALE





**13:** *Junkers Ju 290A-7, W.Nr. 0186, A3-OB, of 1/KG 200. Flown by von Pechmann and seen at Finow on 29 October 1944. Abandoned at Flensburg 5 May 1945. It was ferried to the UK as AM 6 and was scrapped in 1947. Finish appears to be 72/73 with black undersides. Source: Photo*

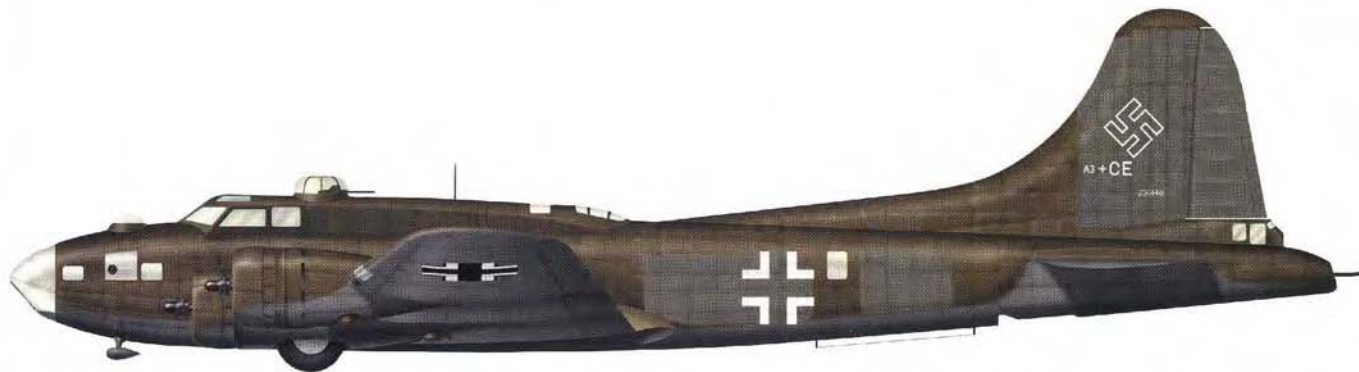
**14:** *The well-known Ju 290A-4/V7, W.Nr. 0165, P1-PS, as flown by 11ptm Braun. Sent to the US it was scrapped on 12 December 1946. Source: Photos*



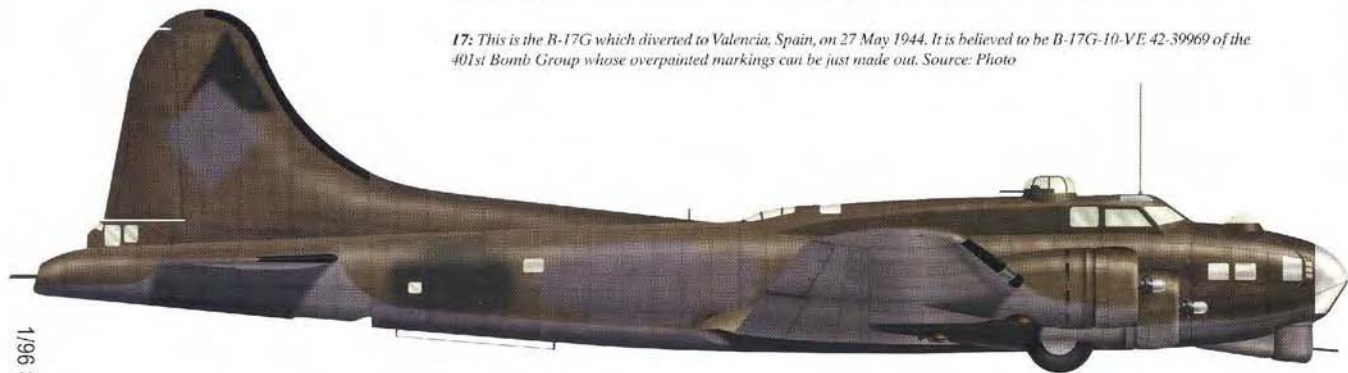
**15:** *According to Oblt Joachim Eisermann's logbook, he flew the Ju 390V2 at Rechlin in February 1945. It was allegedly intended for use by KG 200. No other details are known so this illustration is a reconstruction*







**16:** Boeing B-17F-90-BO, 42-30146, in service with KG 200. This is one of the few B-17s whose original identity and that with KG 200 is definitely known. Finish appears to be original US with much overpainting and weathering. Source: Photo

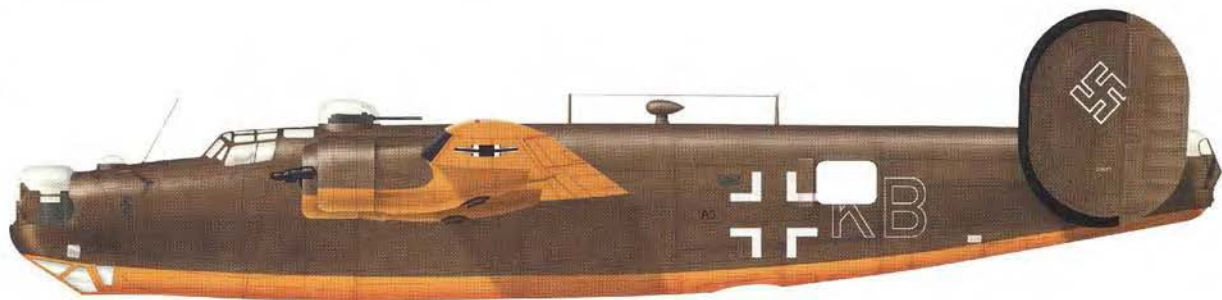


**17:** This is the B-17G which diverted to Valencia, Spain, on 27 May 1944. It is believed to be B-17G-10-VE 42-39969 of the 401st Bomb Group whose overpainted markings can be just made out. Source: Photo

1/96 SCALE

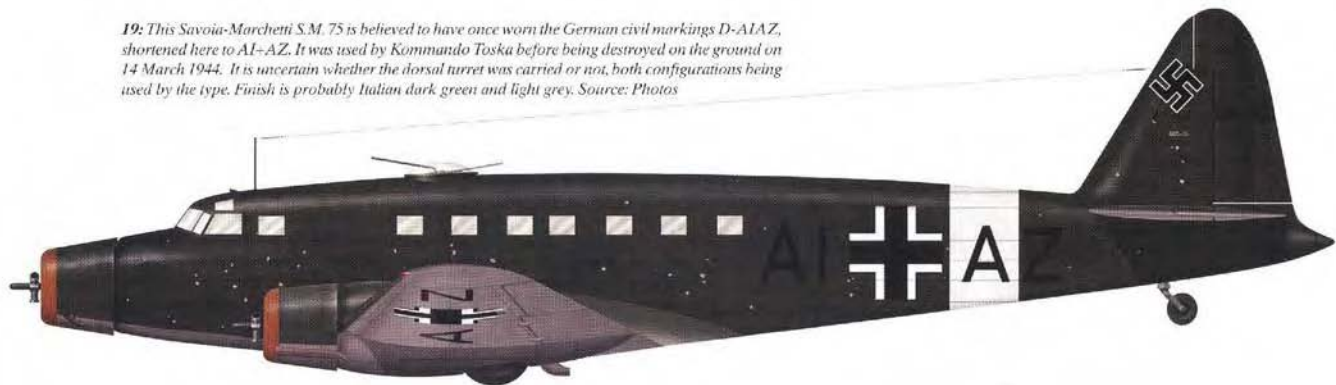


1/96 SCALE



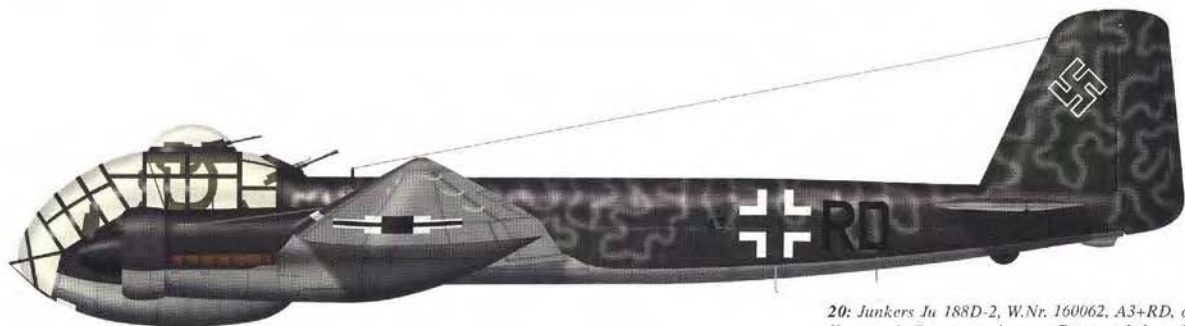
**18:** This B-24H-5-DT, 41-28641, was the first of its kind to be captured by the Luftwaffe. Once with the 453rd Bomb Group, it was recovered at Salzburg in May 1945. Finish appears to be a patchwork of US Olive Drab with German overpainting and markings and yellow-under-sides. Source: Photos

**19:** This Savoia-Marchetti S.M. 75 is believed to have once worn the German civil markings D-ALAZ, shortened here to AL-AZ. It was used by Kommando Toska before being destroyed on the ground on 14 March 1944. It is uncertain whether the dorsal turret was carried or not, both configurations being used by the type. Finish is probably Italian dark green and light grey. Source: Photos

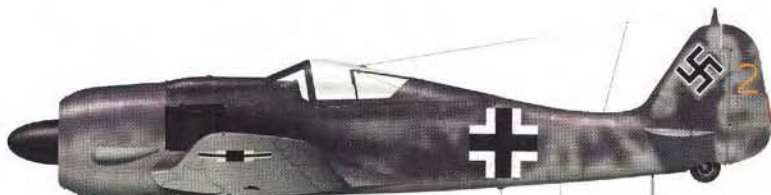


CAMOUFLAGE &amp; MARKINGS

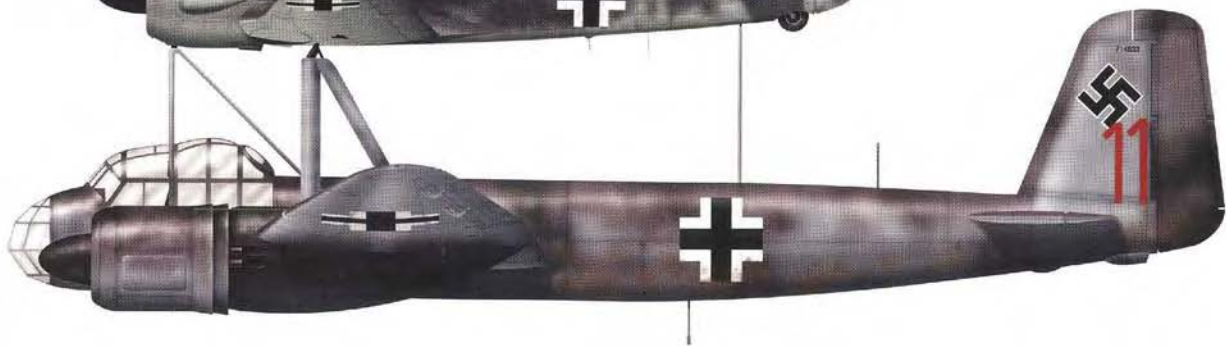




**20:** Junkers Ju 188D-2, W.Nr. 160062, A3+RD, of Kommando Carmen was lost near Bergamo, Italy, on 19 September 1944. Reconstruction



**21:** A Mistel 2 of 6/KG 200 as found at Tirstrup, Denmark, in May 1945. The Ju 88G-1, W.Nr. 714633, Red 11, carried an unidentified Fw 190A-8. Both were probably intended for DRACHENHÖHLE. Source: Photos



1/72 SCALE



1/96 SCALE



**22:** Heinkel He 115, A3+DE, of 3./KG 200, found abandoned at war's end at Schleswig. It has a modified cockpit canopy and a large opening in the belly. Finish is probably 72/73 and black. Source: Photo



**23:** A Dornier Do 24T-3, 3Y+HT, ex-Seenotsiaffel 9, and probably used by KG 200 as it was recorded in Dörwald's logbook at Bug am Rügen on 17 October 1944. Reconstruction

CAMOUFLAGE &amp; MARKINGS



**24:** This is the fourth Sud-Est LeO H-246 used by the Luftwaffe, seen in typical captured enemy aircraft finish at Marseille, shortly before it was delivered on loan to Finland in 1944. It was found unsuited for Finnish conditions and later went to KG 200 as, probably, A3+EC. Source: Photos



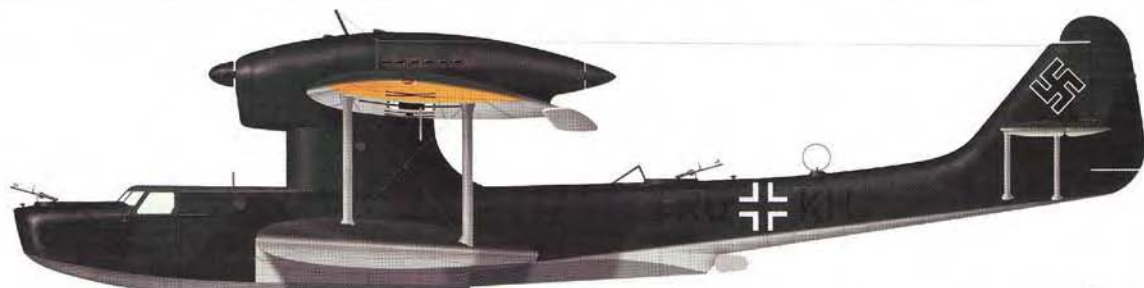
**25:** Another LeO 246, this one 24+62, seen shortly after arrival in Finland where it has received a coat of black paint to tone down the bright yellow area on the tail, but has then received an Eastern Front fuselage band. Uppersurfaces were camouflaged in a green and grey (?) mottle. It later became A3+KC of KG 200. Source: Photos



1/96 SCALE



1/72 SCALE



**26:** There is no documentary evidence to link this Dornier Do 18, RU-KH, with KG 200 other than a statement from a German source that it deliberately landed on wet grass at Wilkede on 4 May 1945. It is, however, quite possible that 3./KG 200 used such a type. Source: Photo



**27:** An unidentified Heinkel He 111H-20, possibly W.Nr. 701706, which was damaged at Wornditt on 13 December 1944. The temporary night winter camouflage is typical of that carried by KG 200 aircraft involved in the RENNSTRECKE operations. Reconstruction



**28:** 16+11 is the first Bloch 161 production aircraft. Only the very similar first prototype was transferred to 2.Versuchsverband./Ob.d.L. as T9+BB. Source: Photo. Scale 1:144

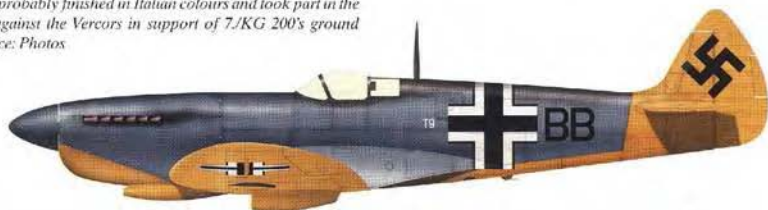
CAMOUFLAGE &amp; MARKINGS



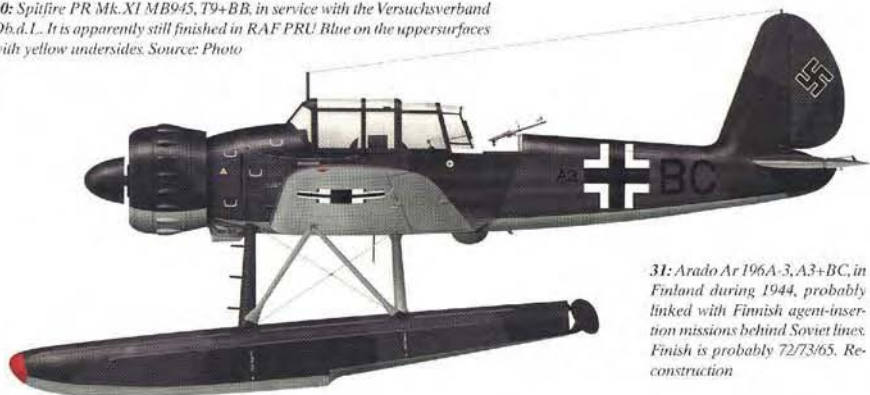
## CAMOUFLAGE & MARKINGS



**29:** Reggiane Re 2002, W.Nr. 1136, BN+YB, of Geschwader Bongart. Black 2 was probably finished in Italian colours and took part in the operations against the Vercors in support of 7./KG 200's ground troops. Source: Photos



**30:** Spitfire PR Mk. XI MB945, T9+BB, in service with the Versuchsverband Ob.d.L. It is apparently still finished in RAF PRU Blue on the upper surfaces with yellow undersides. Source: Photo



**31:** Arado Ar 196A-3, A3+BC, in Finland during 1944, probably linked with Finnish agent-insertion missions behind Soviet lines. Finish is probably 72/73/65. Re-construction

**32:** Siebel Si 204D-1, used by 2./KG 200 in support of Albert Speer's peace negotiations in April 1945. The aircraft flew between Prague and Zurich and apparently changed its markings daily. Source: Photo



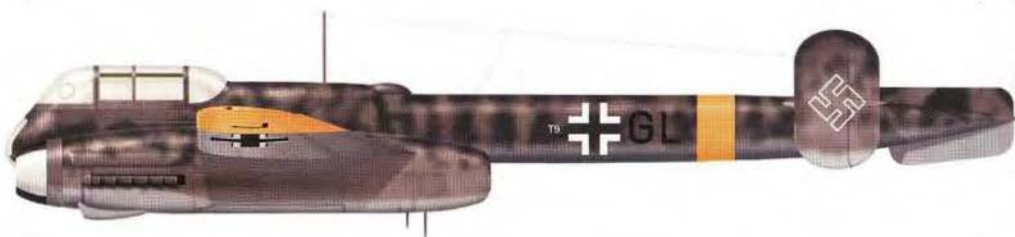
1/72 SCALE



## CAMOUFLAGE & MARKINGS



33: Arado Ar 240A, T5+MH, in service with I./Aufkl.Gr.Oh.d.L.. Finish is shown as 74/75/76 but could also be 70/71/65 in view of the types uncertain purpose. Source: Photo



34: Arado Ar 240A, T9+GL, in service with Versuchsverband/Oh.d.L., in early 1944, probably at Oranienburg. Colours are unknown but seem too light for 70/71. Pattern is definitely non-standard. Source: Photos



35: A DFS 230 of 2./LLG 1, believed to have been used by KG 200 in the operations on the Vercors. Colours are 70/71/65. Source: Photos



36: Another DFS 230 of LLG 1 used to transport men of 7./KG 200 to Vassieux on the Vercors. Source: Photo

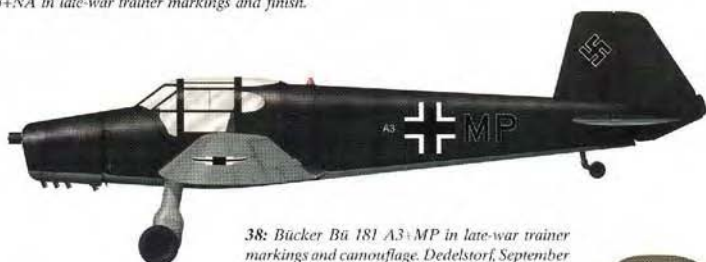
1/72 SCALE



## CAMOUFLAGE & MARKINGS



**37:** Arado Ar 96 A3+NA in late-war trainer markings and finish. Reconstruction



**38:** Bücker Bü 181 A3+MP in late-war trainer markings and camouflage. Dedelstorf, September 1944. Reconstruction



**39:** Avia B-71 SE+DP, W.Nr. 156. Rangsdorf, September 1944. Reconstruction



**40:** Fieseler Fi 156, A3+MB, in late-war trainer markings and camouflage. Finow, February 1945. Reconstruction



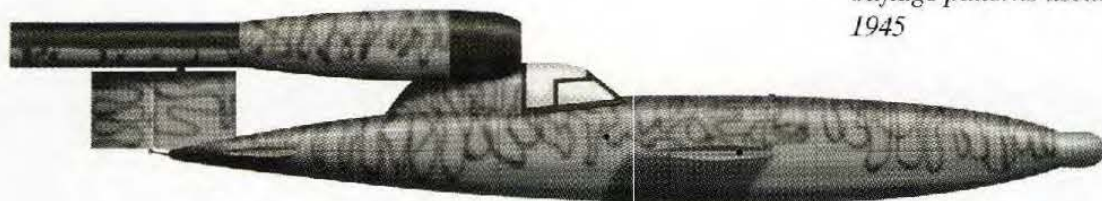
**41:** Messerschmitt Bf 108, A3+LC, in late-war trainer markings and camouflage. Dedelstorf, September 1944. Reconstruction

1/72 SCALE

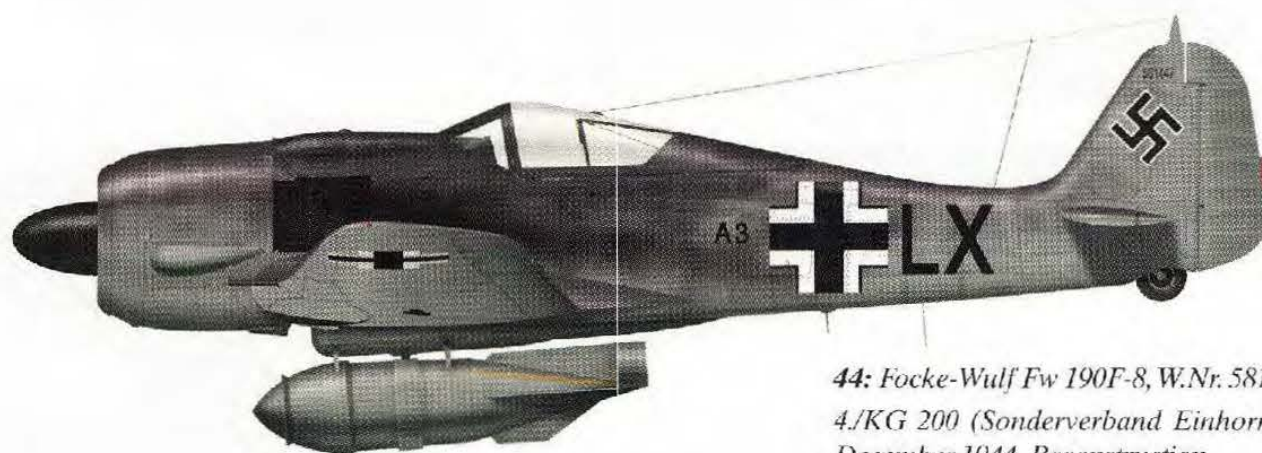
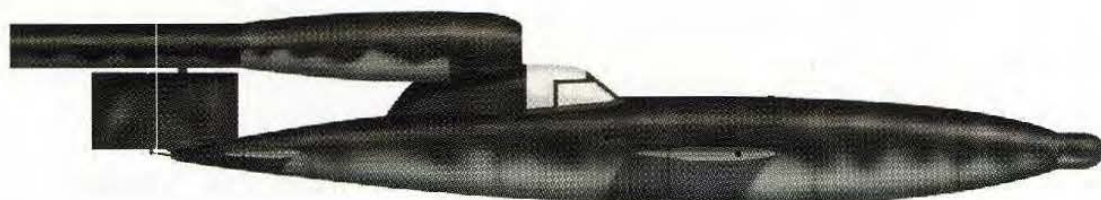


## CAMOUFLAGE & MARKINGS

**42:** An Fi 103 Re 4 Reichenberg in one of several types of camouflage patterns used. This one was shown at Farnborough in 1945

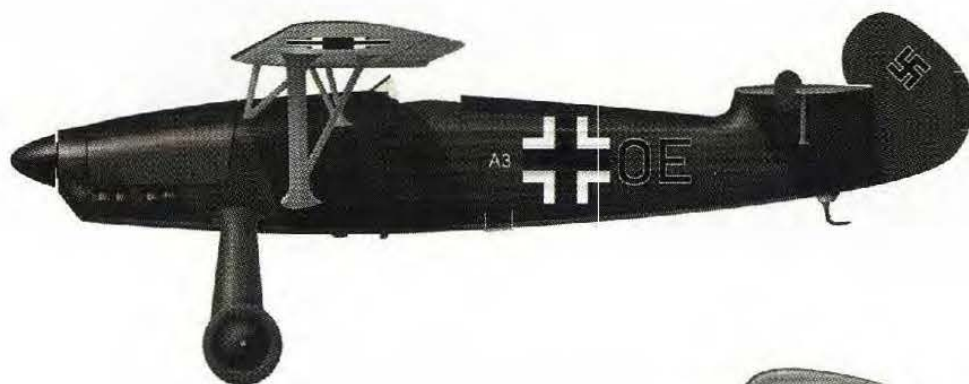
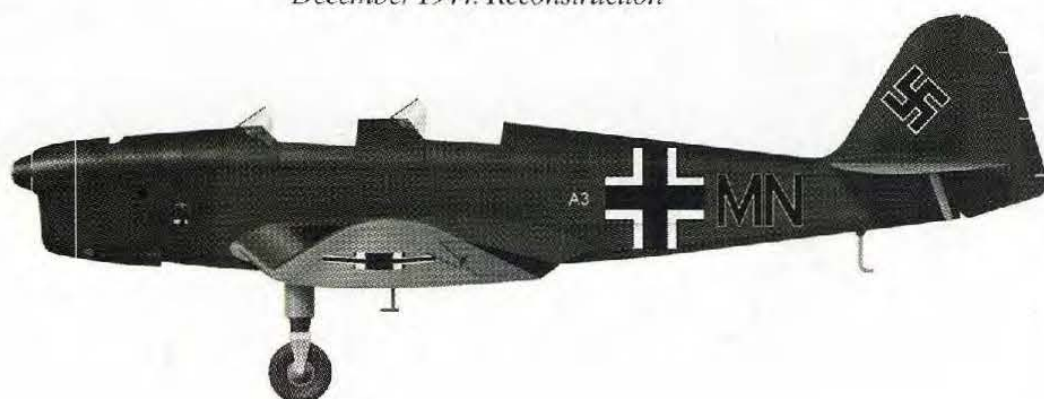


**43:** Another version of Fi 103 Re 4 camouflage



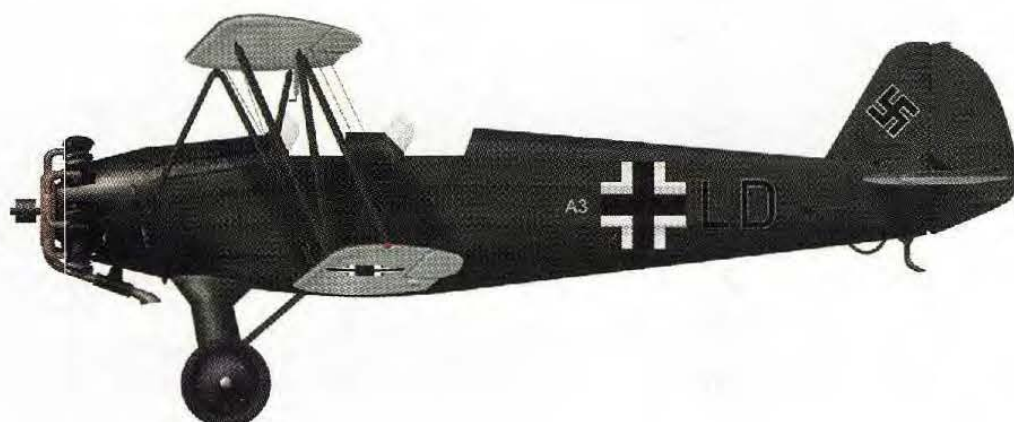
**44:** Focke-Wulf Fw 190F-8, W.Nr. 581447, A3+LX, of 4./KG 200 (Sonderverband Einhorn). Villafranca, Italy, December 1944. Reconstruction

**45:** Klemm Kl 35, A3+MN, in late-war trainer markings and camouflage. Dedelstorf, September 1944. Reconstruction



**46:** Focke-Wulf Fw 56, A3+OE, in late-war trainer markings and camouflage. Pyritz, December 1944. Reconstruction

**47:** Focke-Wulf Fw 44, A3+LD, in late-war trainer markings and camouflage. Finsterwalde, July 1944. Reconstruction



1/72 SCALE



**168:** This is the second prototype of the Ju 352 with the hydraulic 'trapoklappe' ramp lowered. One or two examples of the type are reputed to have found their way to KG 200, presumably to the 1. Staffel. The design of both the Ju 252 and 352 represented something of a dead end, despite the ingenious loading ramp. The Arado 232 was much more modern in concept and practicality



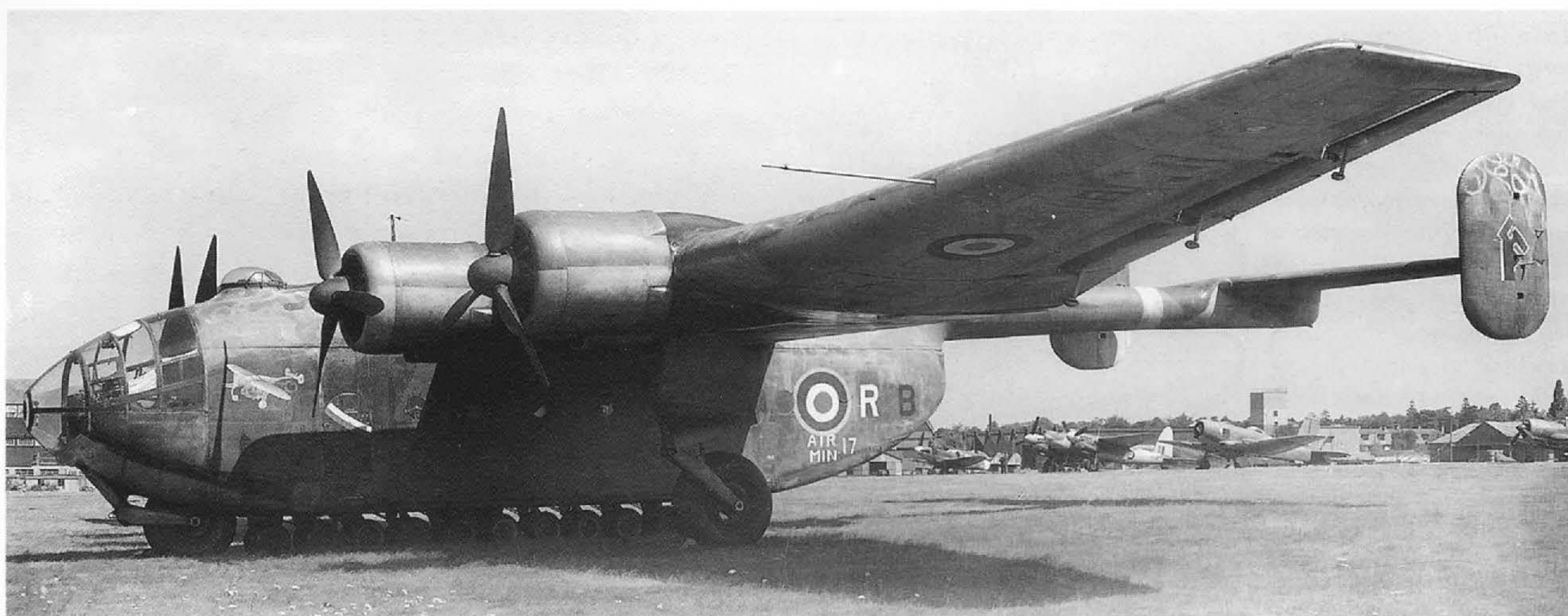
**169 Right:** This is the massive Ju 390V-1 prototype, GH+UK, at Prague-Ruzyně in winter 1944-45. It seems that little use was made of the monster, which was eventually destroyed at Dessau in 1945



**170 Below:** The advanced Ar 232A had a layout much closer to modern transport aircraft, although the addition of two extra engines significantly increased its usefulness. Several were used by KG 200, one surviving to be placed on display in England post-war







## SCHERHORN, MOSUL AND EINHORN

### Efforts in vain

A series of operations in which KG 200 was involved has occupied the interest of several authors, perhaps seduced into writing by the extent of post-war speculation and archive material. In most cases their writings have been incorrect although they have given the operations by KG 200 in this AKTION Scherhorn their due importance.

When the Red Army advanced towards the West in mid-1944, the intended German strategy was simply to maintain forces intact behind the Soviet lines.

As the Russian pressure in the East mounted, Otto Skorzeny had formed 'Jagdverbände' — fighting units — in battalion strength, naming these after the regions in which they were to fight. When Heeresgruppe Mitte collapsed the Red Army threatened to flood across eastern Germany and sweep away everything in its path. Skorzeny then sent some of his battalions into the chaos with orders to 'hold fast'.

On 19 August 1944, reports from an agent cover-named 'Alexander', from a Moscow group led by 'Prestol' and in communication with the OKH, spoke about two thousand men of Infantry Battalion 675 under the command of *Oberst* Heinrich Scherhorn in the Beresino area. Alexander, it appeared, was able to move between his base and Scherhorn's Kampfgruppe holding an isolated pocket deep beyond the Ostfront and intended to form a 'wandering pocket' in order to reach the German lines. These 'pockets' were a feature of almost every Russian offensive. In the same way that a hedgehog moves with its outside surface bristling and armed, these *ad hoc* 'wandering pockets', were largely made up of isolated German units and stragglers by-passed in Soviet offensives, all moving west through the forests of Russia and western Poland, determined to regain touch with their own army. Motivated by their well-founded great fear of being taken prisoner, it says much for the confidence that the Germans had in themselves, their ability to impro-

viser and of the trust which they reposed in the efforts of the Oberkommando to rescue them, that they were able to function at all.

The composition and tactics used by 'wandering pockets' depended naturally enough upon the numbers and arms available. Usually strong infantry patrols to continually swept both flanks of the advance. Armour, if available, led the forward movement and Panzer Grenadiers formed the rear guard. In the centre were the soft-skinned vehicles, the artillery and the wounded.

Progress by a pocket was necessarily slow and nerve-racking, for at every clearing or cross-roads there was the likelihood that the tanks of the Red Army might be waiting to intercept and destroy the German group. Late in June, Scherhorn's men successfully attacked Russian forces with armoured vehicles and reached the Smolensk/Minsk track.

It was to make contact with Scherhorn's pocket that the men from the 'Eastern' battalion were sent out. His group differed markedly from other pockets. His men were exhausted and wounded. He had no armour and very few trucks. Being without radio, he had been out of touch with German forces for weeks. In addition, the pocket was located some 800 km behind the Russian lines. But Scherhorn's men were filled with a fierce determination to return home and to aid them in this endeavour the 'Eastern' battalion formed four groups. Each was made up of two Germans and three Russians. The parties were to be dressed in Red Army uniforms and would carry Russian arms and food. The intention was that they

**171 Above:** One of few aircraft which can be categorically stated to have been used by KG 200 was the Arado Ar 232B-07, W.Nr. 0110029, seen here on display at Farnborough in November 1945. It still wore Luftwaffe camouflage and the emblem of 1./TG 5, to whom it was first issued. Its allotted KG 200 code was A3+RB. Sadly, this was but one of numerous unique German aircraft which were scrapped by short-sighted bureaucrats in the late 'forties



would be taken by air to a point as close as possible to where Scherhorn's pocket was believed to be and the whole group would then parachute down.

'Alexander' had reported that the group had no radio and asked for a drop, to include ammunition, money and medical supplies. As for Skorzeny's Jagdverbände, at the end of August the first detachment was dropped east of Minsk to be followed some days later by the second group which was also taken to the same area. Six days and eight days later respectively the third and fourth sections were dropped.

The predicament of the German men of the groups was daunting; they were being transported to a wild and remote area with whose vast forests they were unfamiliar. They would be dependent upon the loyalty of the former Red Army men who had dropped with them. Their task was to find in the extensive woods a group of men who did not want to be found easily. And all this they must undertake while anti-partisan patrols of the Russian forces made periodic sweeps with armour and aircraft and masses of infantry to destroy the pockets which still held out.

Radio signals from the first group of the 'Eastern' Battalion soon after it had landed indicated that it was under fire from a strong group of Soviet units. The hasty messages gave only the barest information and soon communications were broken off, never to be restored. The second detachment, however, found the Scherhorn group and radioed a harrowing account of the suffering of the wounded and the pitiful condition of the remainder of the group. A doctor was parachuted in, but he broke both ankles on landing. A second doctor was sent in. Fortunately, the radio link between Skorzeny's Battalion HQ and the pocket functioned well and with this restoration of communication aircraft were sent to drop supplies and food to the encircled men.

In a flight from Riga, a radio operator, Deakov, and two agents, one called Sadonikov, of Frontaufklärungskommando 103 were dropped during the night of 15/16 September by Lt Rehderer and Ofw Ewald Lange in He 111, A3+BC, of the 2./KG 200, close to a derelict town called Sanetevo.

Heeresgruppe Mitte, despite being almost destroyed by the Russian advance, but warned of Scherhorn's isolation by Fremde Heer Ost, planned an extensive operation for air supply by KG 200, cover-named RENNSTRECKE (Race-track), to provide continuing support. On 19 October, Gen-Oberst Hans-Georg Reinhardt, Oberkommandeur HGM, told Hitler of Scherhorn's needs. Operational HQ 'Robinson' promptly instructed Luftflotte 6 and Oberst Heigl to be ready to meet those needs. The Army Group estimated that about 50 supply flights by He 111s would be required to enable LS-Btl 675 to march out to join the German forces.

At this point some of the Staff advised great caution because failures to reply clearly and adequately to their questions made them suspect that the Kampfgruppe Scherhorn with which they were in radio contact was not what it seemed to be. Indeed they were right, but their

doubts did not hold up the setting up of the 'approved' RENNSTRECKE. Their concern, however, caused the Stab, Luftflotte 6, to plan a drop of three radio-operators to establish the location — and the very existence — of the 'pocket'. They were to transmit using security 'cut-outs' to warn their home station if they were compromised. In addition on 27 October, Stabzart Jaschke of the Medical Corps and a Luftwaffe officer, Fahnrich Wild, would be sent down with a small detachment to reconnoitre for and to prepare an airstrip.

Six Arado Ar 232Bs of the 'Erganzungs-Transport Gruppe' XIV. Fliegerkorps were transferred with their crews to the 14./TG 4 which operated as required for the Versuchsverband Ob.d.L. over the Baltic, to Norway and Finland. Now these *Tausendfüssler* were to operate for KG 200 from 22 October. Four of these aircraft, (still retaining their unit code 'G6') would take in 20 tonnes of materiel and return with wounded.

The intention was to build an airstrip in the forests from which machines of the KG 200 could evacuate the seriously wounded. The message came, however, that this had had to be abandoned when Red Army patrols found the strip and occupied it. In the meantime, the remaining groups of the 'Eastern' Battalion had had their own experiences. After searching in vain for Scherhorn, the fourth section returned to the German lines after an epic march. The third group vanished into the vastness of the Soviet Union and nothing more was ever heard of it. These events should have sent some sort of warning. Back in Germany, however, it was felt that the time had come to formulate plans for the return of the Scherhorn group to the German lines.

Independently, as yet another check on the radio messages, the RSHA planned its own operation WILDDIEB (Poacher) of four five-man radio teams from Skorzeny's German/Russian Jagdverbände to land in complete secrecy at some distance from Scherhorn's last reported position and to monitor radio traffic. In the intervening period, the Russian juggernaut had moved further westward and they were now nearly 800 km inside Russian territory. A march westwards of that distance was out of the question. To the south, Hungary and Romania were now hostile. There remained only one possible direction and that was northwards, in a bid to reach the town of Dunaburg in Lithuania. Even that, nearly 320 km distant, meant that the group would have to cut across the lines of communication of the Soviet armies fighting at the eastern approaches to Germany. It would be an incredibly dangerous trek, but it was the only choice. Once in Lithuania the aircraft of KG 200 would be able to land on the frozen lakes and take off again, carrying the wounded of Scherhorn's command.

On 4 November, the radio-team led by SS *Untersturmführer* Schiffer signalled linking up with the Kampfgruppe and, a fortnight later, the intention for a section of the group to move out on the 25th or the 26th.

Other factors now came into play. By this stage of the war, despite the increasingly frantic demands made upon the Luftwaffe, the shortage of fuel had drastically reduced



the number of missions which could be undertaken. In these circumstances, the sustenance of one small group of 2,000 men isolated deep inside Russia was at first a low and then an even lower priority. As winter set in fewer and fewer missions were flown to supply food and ammunition to the beleaguered men. The soldiers in the Scherhorn pocket had been out of touch since the late summer and had no winter clothing or equipment. They were, apparently, still resolved to continue with the march. Although Skorzeny and his officers appreciated that the march rate of the 'pocket' would be low, none thought that it would be as painfully slow as 16 km per day for four days of the week and would then need three days of rest. By now alarm bells within Germany should have been ringing very loudly indeed.

Notwithstanding what was obviously a fast deteriorating situation, Scherhorn apparently formed his group into two columns. The first of these was led by the experienced soldiers of the 'Eastern' Battalion and the second by the *Oberst* himself. On 15 November 1944, the columns set out trusting in the Luftwaffe to keep them supplied as they moved towards the Baltic and their final destination. But KG 200 had been forced to reduce even further the number of sorties which it could make and even fewer supplies were dropped to the two columns, now dwindling in effective fighting strength with each day. Increasingly despairing messages reached Germany as the hopelessness of the situation became more apparent.

Even so, supply drops were maintained whenever the weather permitted. For example in December after a month of atrocious conditions, Ewald Lange flew from Gross Schiemann in East Prussia with *Uffz* Bruno Davids in Arado 232s G6+XY and G6+YY and in He 111s A3+BC and A3+HC of the 2./KG 200 with *Ofw* Limbach and *Lt* Rehderer of the 2./KG 200, for missions of four to six hours on 8, 12, 18, 19, 20, 21, 23 and 29 December.

In the event Scherhorn's men never reached Dunaburg. A destination 290 km from the starting point should have been covered, even at the slow speed of 16 km per day through the forests, in less than a month. But the odds against the German columns were enormous. Messages noted furious battles against Soviet patrols; even hand-to-hand fighting as the Germans tried to force their way through. Winter slowed down the pace still further until the weakened men could resist no longer. Eventually, in May 1945, Skorzeny's headquarters received the last faint radio signal from the remnants of the Scherhorn pocket and that, it seems, was that — except that the entire desperate saga was a complete fiction!

*Oberst* Scherhorn, his officers and virtually all his men had been made prisoners of the Soviets by the end of July 1944. Pressure through deprivation caused the group to 'cooperate' with the Russians; Scherhorn himself spent some time in the Lubyanka prison before being better housed. To a large extent, those back in Germany were the victims of a degree of self-deception, possibly in the vain hope that despite the fact that their Führer had abandoned Scherhorn's soldiers to their fate, their comrades in the Luftwaffe were prepared to take great risks to res-

cue them. The Russians, however, who had carried out a masterpiece of deception, described the whole operation as a 'tragi-comedy'.

## MOSUL

While the attention of the OKH and OKL was concentrated on Kommando Clara and problems of agents and supply drops in RENNSTRECKE, the Stab I./KG 200 was still occupied on a number of other operations when and where the weather allowed. A proposed Japan Flight having apparently come to nothing (of which more later), *Hptm* Heinz Braun undertook several Ju 290 operational missions, the new aircraft being fitted with a chute in place of the vertical gun position. During the evening of 27 November 1944, Braun flew his Ju 290A-4, A3+HB, W.Nr. 0165, of the 1. Staffel at Wiener-Neustadt with five Iraqis aboard, and two tonnes of supplies for agents in the Mosul area. There an anti-British movement was led by Mohammed Amin Al Hussein, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, with support from Palestinian Arabs.

On the flight, of some 3,000 km, Braun was accompanied by *Lt* Wolfgang Pohl, engineer, for whom this was the first operation with the I. Gruppe, the aircraft carrying 20,000 litres of fuel. It was expected that the return journey would be made via Rhodes-Gadurra, for the island was still in German hands. At 01.30 hours on 28 November they sighted the rivers Euphrates and Tigris in bright moonlight and came to the railway line and dropping area. From an altitude of only 350 metres the agents dropped by fixed-line parachutes. Braun reached Rhodes at 05.10 hours and was signalled to land by green lights. The flight had taken 12 hours and 51 minutes.

A repeat flight was programmed for the following night, but Braun returned after only 15 minutes with problems; mechanics under Pohl sought the defect without success. After a test flight on 30 November, the problem was found to be a burned cable, and the next day Braun flew the Junkers back to Wiener-Neustadt for repair.

## EINHORN

By mid-June 1944, 2. Staffel was quartered with the II./KG 200 at Dedelstorf, and a decision had been taken to train its pilots, most of whom had experience only on unpowered aircraft, on the Fw 190. The calibre of bomb to be used was now set at 1,100 kg — this in the teeth of Lange's opposition, for he felt the lesser weight promised too little destruction. Even so, however, there was no bomb available that was guaranteed to hold its trajectory once it entered water, and despite attempted 'fixes', only one hit could be achieved out of eight trial drops.

On 15 June, Lange and a small group of his men were taken to JG 103 at Stolp-Parow to get, in the space of 15-20 circuits, enough training to carry out their mission. The syllabus was extended a little but was still completed in six days. There had been no take-offs from concrete runways, even though the intended bomb load would never have permitted the use of grass surfaces, nor had there been any preparation for the planned mode of attack under cover of night or bad weather. The Staffel suffered



it first casualty at Stolp, when *Uffz* Kirchhoff was injured on the 19th. After three days back at Dedelstorf, *Oberst* Kurt Randel-Semper, KG 200's Operations Officer, ordered further practice. Via an abortive return to Stolp, two officers and six NCOs went to Rechlin-Larz for a two-day course covering dives up to 70 degrees, sharp banking with and without heavy practice bombs, take-offs and flights graduating from lighter bombs to the armour-piercing PC 1400. In the course of this training, on 28 June, *Ofw* Meier was injured in an accident at Rechlin in Fw 190F-8, W.Nr. 581558.

Luftflotte Reich was ordered to provide 20,000 litres of fuel for training, and a full complement of Fw 190F-8s was on hand by the end of June (11 of the aircraft were due in Strasbourg-Enzheim by the evening of 25 June, while four others had been supplied to the unit earlier in the month). Deployment to Creil in north-eastern France was set when someone at the highest level went cold on the project shortly after the volunteers had been fêted at a round of receptions in Berlin, forbidding any more test flights or operations.

Lange and his fellow hardliners were instead offered to IX. Fliegerkorps as purported fighter-bomber pilots, when in reality they were just out of primary training on the Fw 190. Each had made one practice bomb release, and none had hit his target. On 23 August, Lange, *Oblt* Schuntermann and six others were visited in Ansbach by Randel-Semper. They were there under the designation 'Sonderstaffel Einhorn' (Unicorn), the first time that this name appears, and it is not clear how they acquired it. The same day, Luftflotte 3 ordered seven ordnance technicians from IX. Fliegerkorps and 16 other ground crew of II. Jagdkorps, all with Fw 190 experience, to report to the III./KG 51 in north-eastern France. The transfer of one of the KG 200's 'super-heavy' fighter-bombers to the same Gruppe was also ordered so that servicing arrangements for Operation EINHORN could be put in hand. On 24 August, Luftgau Belgien/Nordfrankreich ordered three bomb-hoist trolleys of 2,000 kg capacity to be ferried from Creil for use in the projected operation.

On 29 August, Einhorn's Staffelkapitän reported that his unit was to direct its energies only towards ground attack with the "heaviest load". It would operate, after appropriate training, on lines similar to those of KG 51, attacking by evening twilight. The crews were not then up to night flying, so IX. Fliegerkorps intended to transfer the Sonderstaffel to Vorden, near Osnabrück, to train with KG 51's Ergänzungsstaffel and to test their night flying capability. A special fuel allocation was requested so that training of KG 51's replacement pilots would not be impeded by this new commitment. If results were good, operations would start during the present full moon period should worthwhile targets offer themselves within "the small radius of action (150 km)". The III./KG 51's base at Le Culot was to serve as an advanced landing ground.

Despite the reported change to the ground-attack role, the unit was working up for anti-shipping missions with large bombs, reverting to an idea first mooted at the time

of the Sicilian invasion, when consideration had been given to directing I./SKG 10's Focke-Wulfs armed with 1,000 kg weapons against ships. In the intervening year or so, more powerful aircraft had come into service and the 1,800 kg Trialen bomb (the SC 1800 *Satan*) was now the chosen weapon. The bomb would have to be released in a steep glide, entering the water 30m from, and at right angles to, the target. It would be fused to explode some 10-15 m beneath the vessel, lifting it in the water and breaking its back. *Fw* Hartebrod (later with the II./KG 200) took off with an 1,800 kg bomb aboard a Fw 190. It was found that this configuration demanded special tyres and a take-off run of 1,200 m, compared with 860 m for a normally-loaded Fw 190F-8.

On 11 September, Luftflotte 3 logged an order to KG 200 that Sonderkommando Einhorn was to transfer immediately to München-Riem, there to be at the disposal of Luftflotte 2. Why this "immediate" move did not transpire for over five weeks is not clear, but before it did, another task was to intervene.

After American troops took the critical road and rail bridge across the River Waal at Nijmegen, Holland, on 20 September 1944, the Germans made repeated efforts to destroy them, and Einhorn was among the forces thrown into the fight. A POW said that the best five pilots of the III./KG 51 arrived one day at Achmer, taking off with the following dawn in Einhorn's specially equipped aircraft. They carried out a glide attack on the bridges with 1,800 kg bombs, being credited with hits on both, the pilots returning to their own unit thereafter. At the time, the mission was credited unequivocally to Einhorn. Luftflotte 3's situation report for 28 September 1944 records that seven Fw 190s of KG 200 attacked bridges at Nijmegen, scoring a direct hit on the road bridge and another on the railway bridge for the loss of one aircraft.

The lost pilot was a 30-year-old Austrian, *Lt* Herbert Leschanz, killed flying Fw 190F-8 W.Nr. 581600, A3+MA. He had been a member of II./KG 200's 4. Staffel, the 'self-sacrifice' training and replacement unit. It was Leschanz's misfortune to run into an early patrol by Spitfires of No 411 Squadron (RCAF), which reported intercepting eight Fw 190s trying to dive-bomb the bridges. Flight Lieutenant Portz and Flying Officer Graham each claimed one destroyed and three more were claimed damaged by other members of the Squadron. As seen by defending AA gunners, 10 plus Fw 190s attacked without warning from the north-east at 06.46 hours, dive-bombing from 5,000 down to 152 m. The action lasted two minutes and, despite the firing of over 400 rounds of 3.7 in and 40 mm Bofors shells, the Germans hit the rail bridge with a 500 kg bomb, putting it temporarily out of action, and slightly damaged part of the other bridge's roadway, so the gunners reported.

Einhorn's next appearance in the records is on 5 October 1944, when it was noted that the Sonderstaffel was "due to transfer to Upper Italy in the near future with 14 Fw 190s (ground attack aircraft with the heaviest bombs)." Although still listed on the strength of Luftflotte Reich with seven aircraft (five serviceable) on the 10th,



ULTRA confirmed that the 'Special Staffel' was to transfer from Achmer on the 6th, its "flying apparatus" being consigned to Holzkirchen railway station in Bavaria. On 19 October 1944, the unit flew its Fw 190F-8s into the airfield at Villafranca di Verona, Italy.

In Italy, Einhorn's pilots underwent five weeks further training and a crushing Allied air raid on their base before flying a handful of missions against the Allied armies. Meanwhile, events back home were deciding the unit's future. On 6 November 1944, KG 200 underwent a reorganisation into four Gruppen, where before there had been only two. Elements of the former 4./KG 200 and of Einhorn were merged into a new 14./KG 200 at Dedelstorf, serving as a "training Staffel for all aircraft types". The 4. Staffel itself metamorphosed into 16. Staffel, based at München-Riem and still concerned with training and replacement functions. Einhorn's operational section became the 13./KG 200, an element of IV. Gruppe.

In the 6 November reorganisation, KG 200 received its new III. Gruppe when the I./SG 5, not long out of Finland, was re-designated Stab III., 9., 10., and 11./KG 200. On 11 November, OKL announced its intention that Einhorn was to be incorporated into this new III. Gruppe, joining the Geschwader's other Fw 190 units. These measures were formally carried into effect on 8 January 1945.

An order of 14 November assigned Einhorn a role in the forthcoming Ardennes offensive, attacking "...important objectives such as bridges on the flanks", but it was later deleted from the list of units to be employed. Battle had already been joined by the time it left Italy for Holzkirchen and at 01.20 hours on 18 December that airfield's workshops were ordered to restore Einhorn's technical serviceability by all possible means, night working included. The unit was then to transfer to Bonn-Hangelar for a "...special operation (dropping of heaviest bombs)." If insufficient aircraft for special operations were available, the move was to take place with "ordinary aircraft". By the evening of 29 December, Einhorn had five FW 190s at Hangelar (three serviceable), attached to NSGr 20. This front-line strength was never exceeded (although the OKL credited 13./KG 200 with 21 Focke-Wulfs [15 serviceable] on 10 January) and only one aircraft remained unserviceable by the evening of 14 January.

The plan to attack Scapa Flow remained a possibility until January 1945 but was postponed because of typically bad North Sea weather. Baumbach, perhaps fretful that his Geschwader, although holding many operational aircraft, was having no effective use, again put forward his earlier plan for EISENHAMMER, with coordinated attacks by Mistel and Ju 290s based on the airfields at Oranienburg, Rechlin-Larz and Rostock, directed (like DRACHENHÖHLE) with flare marking by I./KG 66.

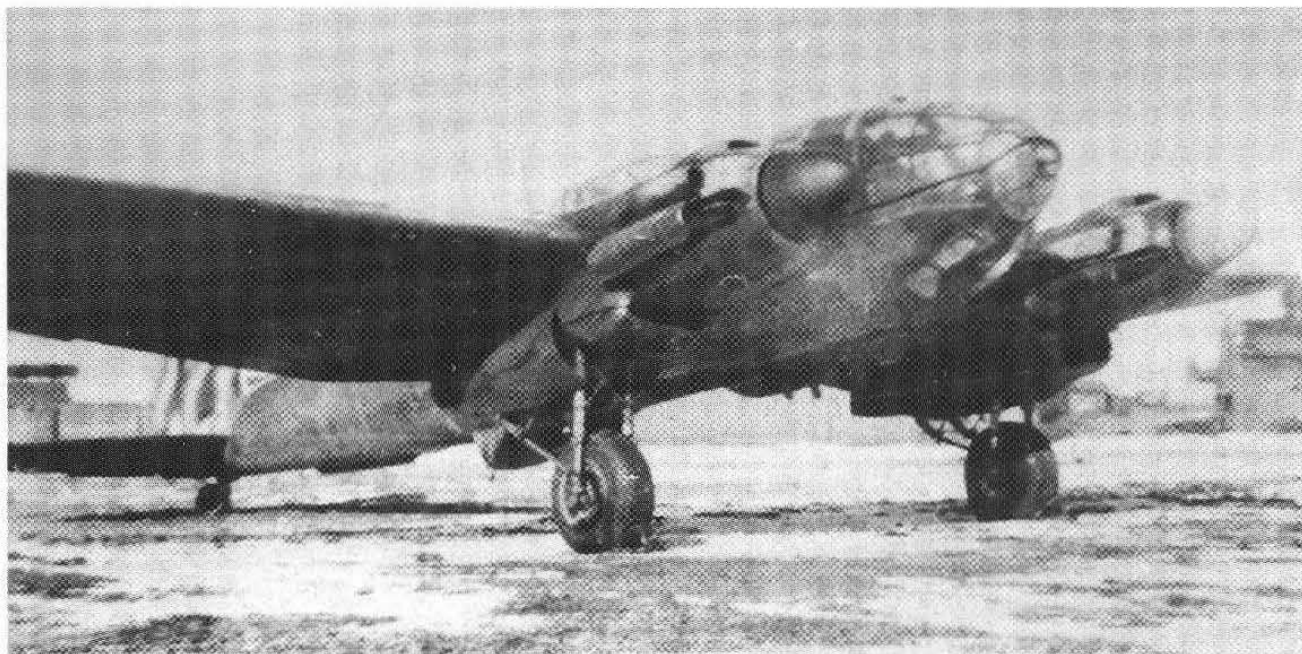
In January an additional 43 Ju 88G-6 night-fighters were required to be withdrawn and flown to Bernberg as the Gruppe for Mistel operations, with attachments at Burg, Stendal and in Denmark. The Gruppe was tentatively prepared for EISENHAMMER in restricted form but, as we shall see, the preparations were disrupted by the USAAF in April.

At a conference on 10 January between KG 200's Kommodore and *Oberst* von Geiff of the General Staff, it was decided that 9. and 10./KG 200 should deploy to Stavanger-Sola, Norway with 15-18 aircraft. They were intended to take part in DRACHENHÖHLE, along with 15 Mistel composites. The Focke-Wulfs were supposed to use the BT series of Bombentorpedo anti-shipping weapons, the hoped-for solution to the water-trajectory problem. *Oberstlt* Werner Baumbach's proposal that the remaining BT Staffel (II.) should be put at Jagdkorps' disposal alongside Einhorn for night attack operations on the Western Front was accepted. He was also tasked with evaluating a possible Einhorn operation against the Antwerp harbour lock gates and reporting his conclusions, but on 14 February this plan was called off. The Sonderstaffel and NSGr 20 moved to Twente, Holland, at the end of January, to be joined there by the 11./KG 200. In early February, Schuntermann and the ground echelon were posted to Prenzlau, leaving Einhorn's seven pilots to be absorbed into the 11. Staffel.

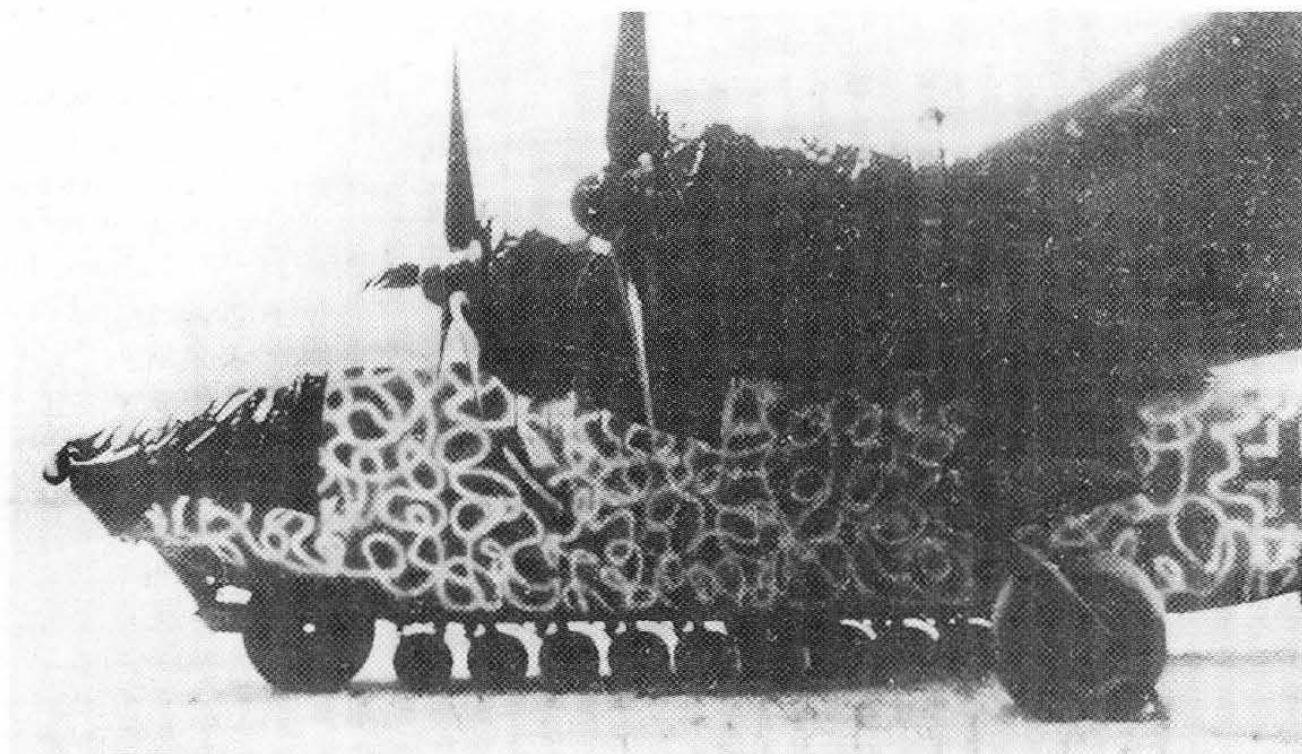
Some of the last official traces of Einhorn's existence are in a schedule prepared by Luftflotte Reich to assist the Allied disbandment of the Luftwaffe, placing III./KG 200, commanded by *Oblt* Schoppe, at Eggebek, close to the Dutch border, with 31 Fw 190s and 446 personnel, of whom 60 were aircrew, on 6 May 1945. Another list from the same period puts the 13. and 16./KG 200 at Vejle, Denmark and 14. at Tirstrup. By 13 May, 13. Staffel was listed at Flensburg, and 14. had left Denmark "for the south" but these movements can hardly have represented any more than groups of men being billeted or trying to make their way home — the time for operational flying had long gone.



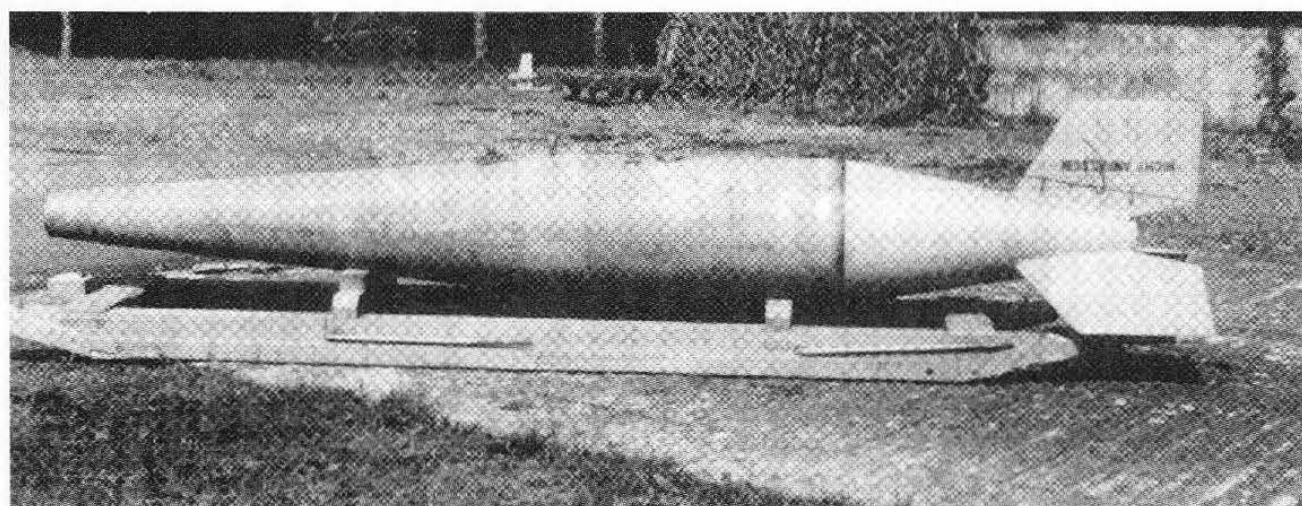
**172:** A typically nondescript Heinkel He 111 of KG 200 in winter camouflage during the RENNSTRECKE supply operations. It has no visible markings or nose armament and has been fitted with additional exhaust flame dampers. This aircraft was flown by Lt Wichmann and his crew



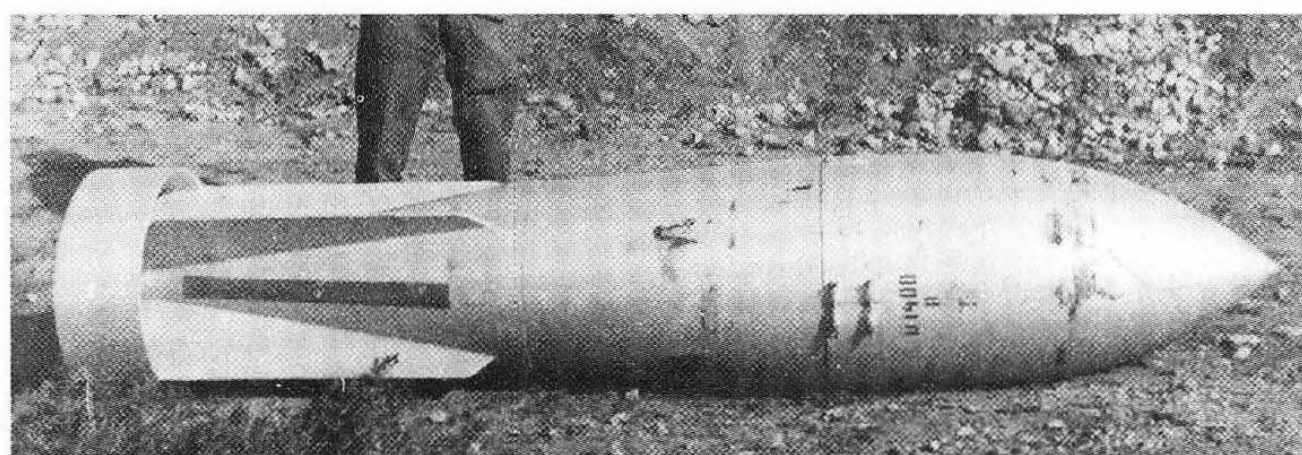
**173:** This Arado Ar 232B also took part in the RENNSTRECKE operations during winter 1944-45, wearing hurriedly applied temporary winter camouflage. The short white line below the inner engine is part of a red and white safety marking on the crew access door indicating the line of the propeller arc. A similar marking could also be seen on the Ar 232 on display at Farnborough post-war



**174:** This futuristic looking device, the BT 400, was the intended weapon for use against Allied shipping by the SO men and their Fw 190s. Its main advantage over more conventional weapons was its ease of production and use of less strategically important ferrous metals



**175:** Most anti-shipping strikes by the Luftwaffe made use of heavy armour-piercing bombs such as this PC 1400 'Fritz' which had 300 kg of TNT within its casing. Some use was made of these 'super-heavy' bombs (and the even heavier SC 1800) by KG 200's Sonderstaffel Einhorn







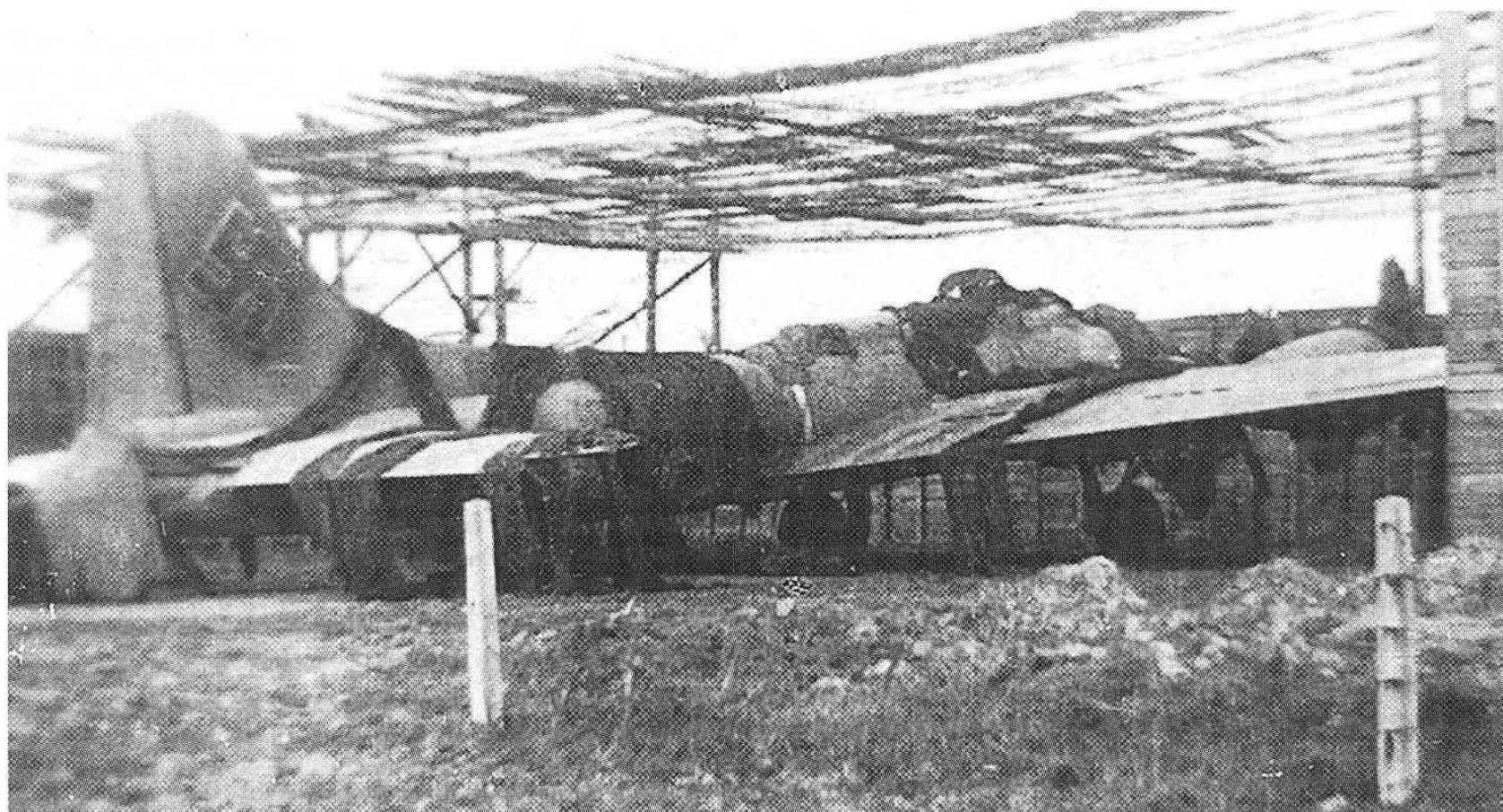
**176:** Shown in the display of captured German aircraft held at Farnborough in October 1945, this Fw 190F-8/R15, Werk Nummer unknown, was captured at the German marine testing station at Travemünde. Given its anonymous finish, it is possible that it was used by III/KG 200. The lengthened tail wheel which gave clearance for an under-fuselage torpedo or bomb is clearly visible. Presumably it was also fitted with the strengthened undercarriage. Given the Air Ministry number AM 111, its ultimate fate is unknown



**177 Above:** This Arado Ar 232B-07, W.Nr. 0110029, (RAE records say 305002) also on display at the RAE at Farnborough, is one of the few well-documented aircraft known to have been used by KG 200. Only one aircraft definitely known to have been used by KG 200 still survives. This is the Focke-Wulf Fw 190A-8, W.Nr. 733682, which once formed part of a Mistel 3 of II./KG 200 and is now on display in the Imperial War Museum in London

**178 Left:** A closer view of A3+RB. It probably served on the RENNSTRECKE flights. After capture at Eggebek, the RAF made some use of it postwar





## 1945 OLGA LOOKS WEST Using the B-17s

On the Eastern Front, the Heinkels of the 2. Staffel (the Order of Battle showed 15 on charge from March 1944 until the end of the year), mostly He 111 H-6 and H-20 series, were continually on operations whenever the weather allowed, but their supplies-carrying capacity was considered insufficient. Six Arado Ar 232B-O four-engined transports were transferred with their crews from Maj Petz's 'Ergänzungs-Transport Gruppe' to the 14./TG 4 for cooperation with Kommando Clara. This Transport Gruppe had flown 'special operations' as a part of Transport-Flieger Staffel 5 for the Versuchsverband Ob.d.L. over the Baltic, to Norway, Finland and northern Russia. It is almost certain that the Ar 232B-O which crash-landed near Kuklovo on 6 September when the Tavrín operation was begun, belonged to this unit. One Ar 232B remained with KG 200 until the end of the war.

As the Allies advanced into France and the Low Countries, the outstations of Kommando Olga closed down. The 1./KG 200 moved from Finsterwalde to Finow in September, although Finsterwalde remained in operational use by the 1. and 2. Staffeln.

In the West, the liberation of northern and north-western France in the summer of 1944 brought about an in-

crease in the demand for operations by Kommando Olga, operating from Frankfurt. Foremost was the need to maintain contact with the 'stay behind' sabotage and intelligence groups which had a far more difficult problem of remaining active than had similar groups behind the Soviet lines. The 1./KG 200 He 111s, Ju 188s and B-17s in 11 sorties dropped 157 V-Leute with provisions while Frontaufklärungs-Kommandos demanded 114 further operations. The intensity of operations can be gauged by the example of Lt Rederer who carried out 21 such missions in He 111 A3+KB during May alone.

On appointment as Geschwaderkommodore, Oberst Baumbach appointed Lt Peter Stahl, previously at Wiener-Neustadt, to command Olga and to set priorities to make best use of his aircraft and crews. Baumbach also brought with him Maj Adolf von Harnier as Operations Offizier 1A, replacing Randel-Semper who remained with the Geschwader in an 'advisory' capacity to continue his dealing with the OKL and RSHA. In February 1945, he was transferred to OKL, but apart from a few agent-dropping sorties flying activity had come to an end. Kommando Olga was operating at full capacity — for instance, on the night of 23/24 November, Stahl, flying a Ju 188 made three sorties, dropping materiel to an agent near Breda in the Netherlands, parachuting an agent into Belgium and dropping a PAG some 60 miles south-west of Paris.

The schedules for Olga had become almost impossible to achieve; it appears that RSHA Amt VI had no real

**179 Above:** Shown in a heavily camouflaged revetment at Hildesheim in April 1945, the original identity of this KG 200 B-17 remains unknown. From this angle it is impossible to say whether it is a B-17F or -G. The large size of the swastika, which has apparently been applied over the original camouflage, could be a clue to its identity



appreciation of the difficulties of flying units 'in the field' and considerable ill-feeling developed. This coincided with the disappointment felt by the promoters of the Totaleinsatz project and may have been instrumental in the removal of Oberst Heigl from command of the Geschwader.

Except for accidents causing damage, Kommando Olga suffered no losses until 10 December 1944 when Ju 188 A3+BD crashed during an 'insertion' flight, but during the early weeks of 1945 losses began to mount.

Early in January *Oblt* Adalbert Freiherr von Pechmann flew a B-17, A3+BB, from Finow for operations under the control of Kommando Olga from Stuttgart-Echterdingen. The first sortie was on 12 January to Marseille, Operation KADELLA. Von Pechmann, with *Ofw* Paul Knappenschneider as navigator, flew across Switzerland at 5,000 m, dropped agents and returned to Echterdingen at 02.40 hours in the morning. The following night the crew undertook another operation, PERLEN-FISCHER (Pearl Fisher), taking-off at 23.30 hours for a dropping zone west of Paris and returning to base at 06.05 hours on 14 January. Two days later the crew flew A3+BB back to Finow. During a dropping mission on 22 January, Ju 188 A3+QD was shot down and another Junkers Ju 188, W.Nr. 260399, A3+LD, was lost between Erfurt and Echterdingen on 3 February.

Another disaster struck Kommando Olga a week later. On 9 February\* a B-17, perhaps A3+CE (identified by Swiss author, Hans Heiri Stapfer, as *Down and Go!*, 42-30146) was to undertake a 'top priority' mission, carrying ten 'officials' and members of Marshal Petain's Government, temporarily based at Sigmaringen in Wurttemberg. The group, chief among them the *Comte* De Bony De Lavergne, may have been intending to attempt to reach an 'understanding' between Petain and de Gaulle's Provisional Government or to raise opposition to de Gaulle. The B-17 carried a crew of nine including the pilot, *Ofw* Karl Knappenschneider, and co-pilot *Ofw* Georg Joachim, and two gunners. Take-off was at 22.00 hours but the Fortress had just begun to climb when it exploded in a ball of fire. The gunners, *Uffz* Heinz Henning and *Fw* Friedrich Seeger, were thrown clear and survived, but debris killed a man of the watching ground crew. All the Frenchmen were buried at Echterdingen.

An inquiry was promptly convened, but could reach no conclusion about the explosion which may have resulted from 'political sabotage' or from the accidental explosion of a device intended to destroy the aircraft if it should be forced to land in liberated France. The Luftwaffe was always greatly concerned about the possibility of 'its' aircraft being captured or recovered by the Allies, having lost several machines fitted with secret or semi-secret radar and armament by forced-landing, faulty navigation or other mischance.

B-17 A3+BB was flown again to Hildesheim and on to Stuttgart-Echterdingen late in February. Its missions were delayed because of adverse weather over western Europe until the night of 2/3 March when, piloted by *Fahnrich* Schenderlein, the B-17 took off to cross the

Upper Rhine just clear of the Swiss frontier and headed for central France. Schenderlein turned northwards and in the early hours dropped nine agents with their supplies in northern France and the Low Countries. He flew a reciprocal course at 6,000 ft and turned north-east over the Vosges — but he had already been located by Allied radar.

The radar control 'Churchman' directed a Beaufighter of the US 415th Night Fighter Squadron, based at Ochey, onto the course of the B-17, heading towards Strasbourg. The Beaufighter pilot, Lt Gilpin, quite soon spotted Schenderlein's aircraft, identifying it in the dark as an Fw 200. He immediately attacked and, although there was answering fire, he set the bomber's starboard wing on fire. Six members of the B-17 crew parachuted to safety before their aircraft crashed and burned out near Luvigny, south of Strasbourg, at 06.18 hours. Three survivors were found and made prisoner, but the others perished. A3+BB was described by crew members and by others of the 2./KG 200 as a B-17G, but this may have been in error for a B-17F. The aircraft in question was almost certainly 42-3190, a B-17F-35-DL, *Mr Five by Five*.

An unusual mission by Olga was KARNEVAL (Carnival). Threats of dire punishment were made to deter any German from collaborating with the advancing Allies. The first German city to be occupied by the US 1st Army was Aachen, where the Americans appointed as Oberbürgermeister a 'non-Nazi', Franz Oppenhoff. On the night of 19 March, a B-17 of the 1./KG 200, commanded by *Oblt* Paul Karger and flown by *Lt* Pohl, carried seven agents from Hildesheim over Belgium. The pilot followed a stream of returning RAF bombers to avoid being fired upon and, when challenged, Karger fired distress signals to indicate damage. The B-17 headed for Antwerp, then for Brussels where one agent was dropped by parachute, then a 'Werewolf' party of six was dropped near Waals, Holland, eight kilometres from Aachen. The party, including a young woman and a 16-year-old boy who would act as look-outs and divert suspicion, approached Oppenhoff's house on the evening of 24 March. On the doorstep, Oppenhoff was shot and killed by SS-*Oberscharführer* Joseph Leitgeb. The German press announced that Oppenhoff had been executed "by order of the German People's Courts". This and a few minor incidents apparently persuaded SHAEF that the Werewolf threat was serious.

During the month one or two aircraft were picked up by radar on at least 11 nights, so SIGINT (Signals Intelligence) of 2nd Tactical Air Force reported; B-17s twice to Rotterdam (17 March) and to the Jura on 31 March, other missions by Ju 188s, presumably for 'stay behind' groups in Allied territory.

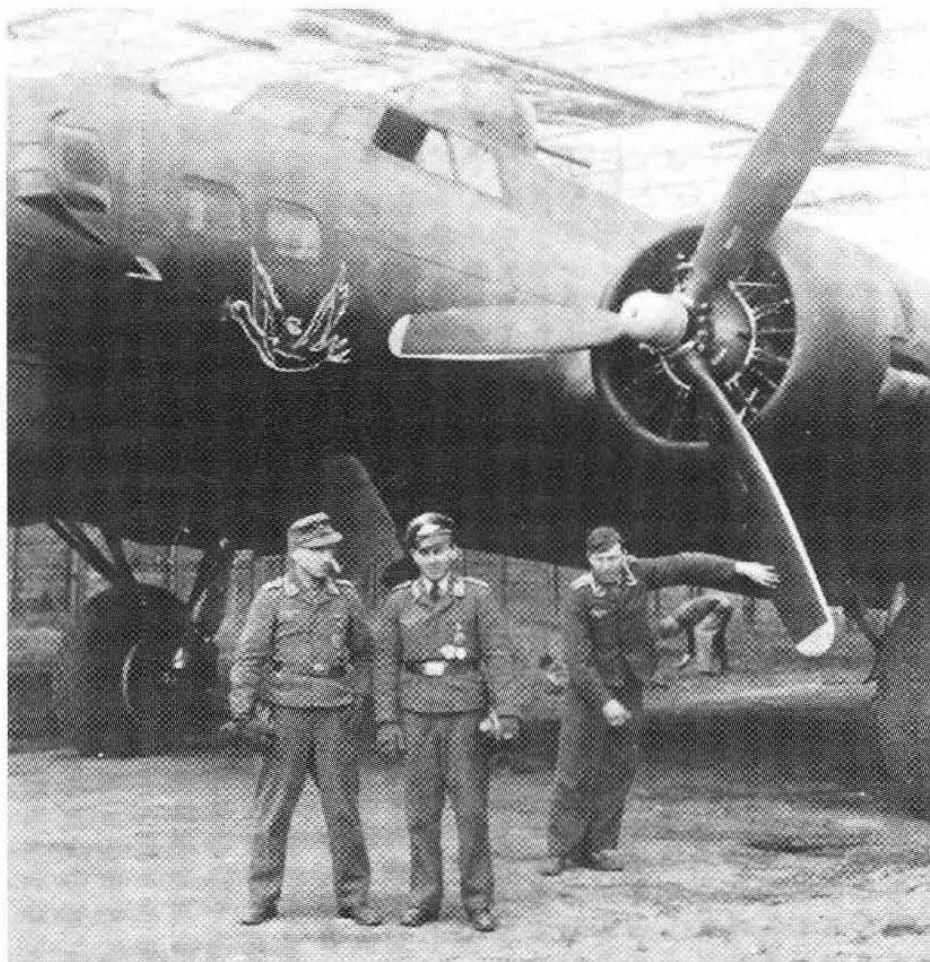
\*In his memoirs Peter Stahl records the event as being in March, but the 1./KG 200 loss list clearly states February



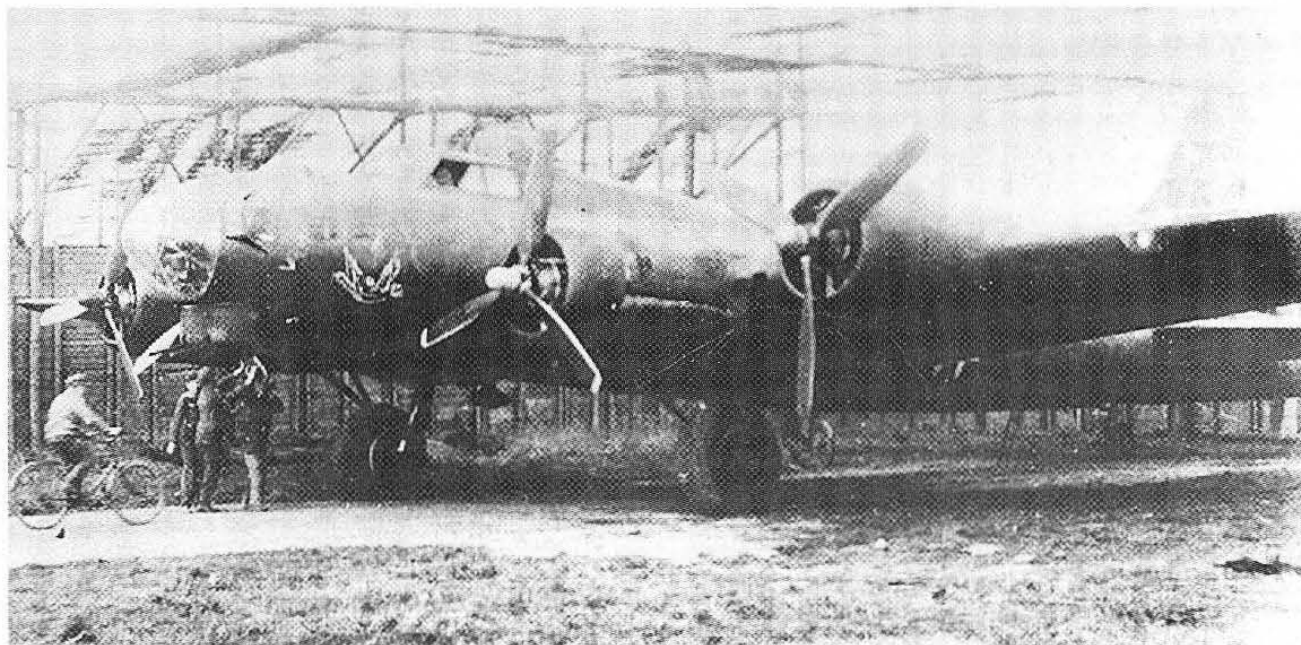
**180:** Echterdingen, February 1945 and Oblt Peter Stahl, commander of Kommando Olga, lays a wreath on the graves of those killed in the crash of a B-17, A3+CE, which blew up shortly after take-off on the night of the 2nd, killing all on board except the tailgunner. The passengers were high level members of the Vichy French government trying to make good their escape. The probable cause of the crash remains unknown but sabotage cannot be ruled out



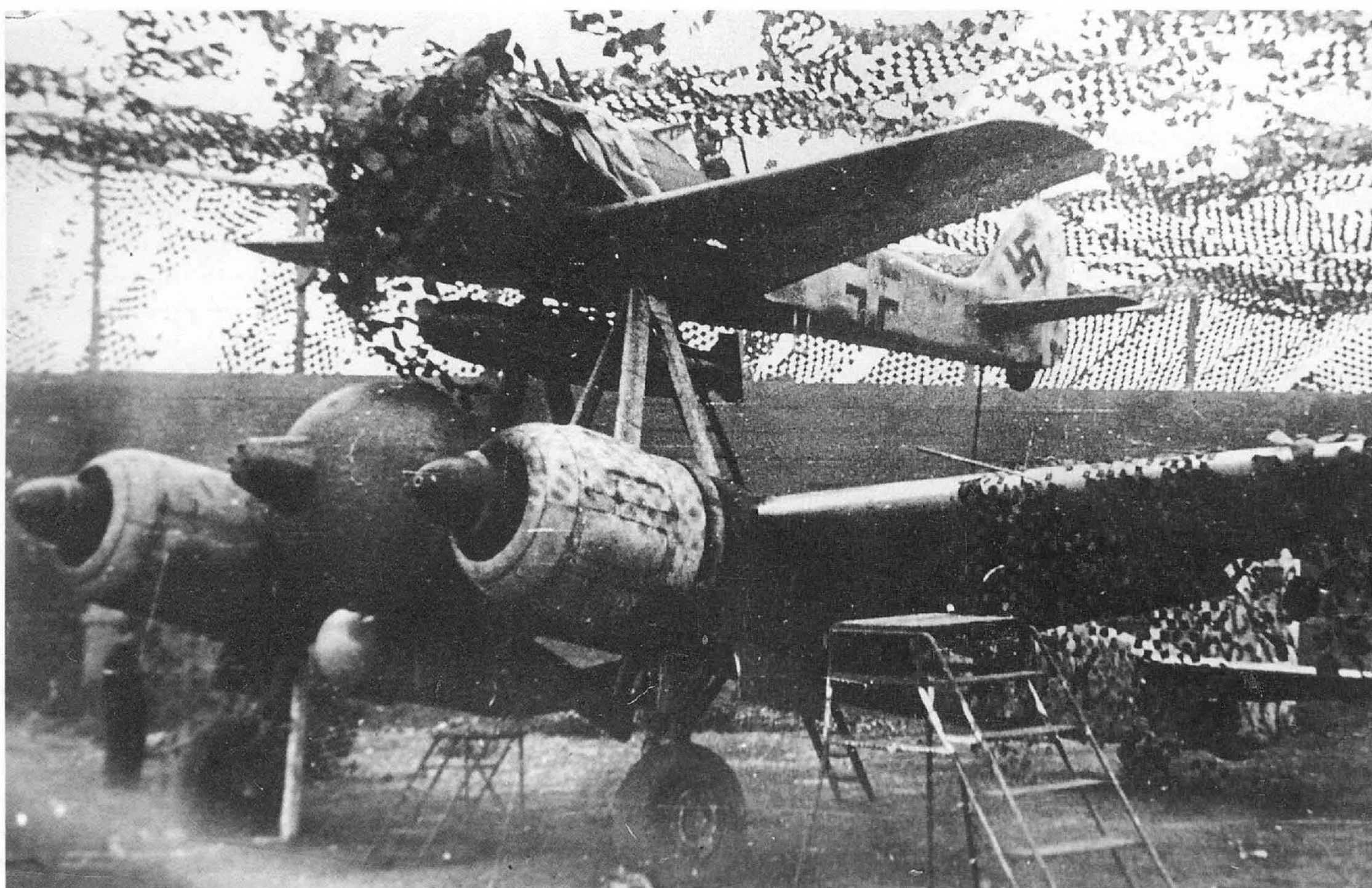
**181:** Two unidentified members of KG 200 pose in front of their Boeing B-17G at Hildesheim in April 1945. This is the only known example of a personal insignia on a KG 200 aircraft. The cartoon of a character riding a swan (which appears to hold a bomb in its beak) was applied by the Luftwaffe and is based upon a Nils Holger-son fairy tale. The German-applied camouflage appears to be a light grey 'wellen-muster' line over dark green or grey uppersurfaces. Undersides are almost certainly black



**182:** Another view of the same B-17G seen above at Hildesheim in April 1945. Unfortunately the original US identity of the aircraft is not known. Two possible contenders are 42-38017 and 42-39974. Other identified B-17Gs had either been already lost or had different Luftwaffe markings at this date







## DANGEROUS GAMES

### Baumbach and Speer

Baumbach was surprised to be awakened at 05.00 hours one April morning and summoned to the Ministry of Armaments by the Minister, Albert Speer. He was further surprised to find the meeting held “conspiratorial” circumstances when Speer drove him in his (Speer’s) own car while Baumbach’s vehicle followed. Speer begged the *Oberstleutnant*’s confidence and silence, no-one else having any knowledge of what he proposed. He asked bluntly: “Do you believe the war is lost?” — the mere asking of which could very easily lead to a prison-yard and a garrote or shooting. When Speer’s ‘meeting’ ended beneath a road bridge on the outskirts of Berlin, he asked Baumbach to meet him again in two or three days so that if the Kommodore’s reply was affirmative, he would learn more of Speer’s plans.

This he did, as Dr Gellermann confirms. Speer’s first plan was to bring the war to an end by assassinating his patron and leader by dropping a container of poison gas into an air-conditioning intake of the Führerbunker, but that had to be abandoned because the air-intake shaft had been extended upwards by four metres. The danger in the plan was greatly increased by the prospect of carrying a ladder, unexplained, through the Chancellery grounds. Speer now proposed that Hitler could best be assassinated while apart from his close entourage, when he went nightly to his air-raid shelter without an escort from the Führer-Begleitkommando. The Minister had

observed that that the RAF dropped target-marking flares — ‘Christbaumen’ (Christmas trees) at the beginning of a raid. All traffic in the area was made to stop so Speer proposed that flares fired into the air simulating the Christmas trees would halt the cars, making an opportunity to kidnap Hitler’s closest associates and advisors by drugging them and carrying them from their vehicles to ambulances standing by.

Speer would then, under the pretext of showing Hitler and Bormann a fictional ‘Wunderwaffe’ (wonder-weapon) at his Ministry, ensure that they would also be rendered unconscious. This seemingly easy (to Speer) plan involved him and his captives being driven to an airfield and then to England.

To implement his plan, Speer would rely on Baumbach who, having been appointed by order of the Führer on 1 March as ‘Bevollgemachtigter for Brückebekämpfung’ — a grand title meaning ‘Plenipotentiary for Bridge Attack’, better translated as Supreme Commander for Bridge At-

**183 Above:** Pictured in a well-camouflaged dispersal bay at Oranienburg in March 1945, this Mistel 2 combination is typical of the equipment available to KG 200 in its bridge-busting role. Although it is likely that the parent unit was not KG 200 but KG 30, such distinctions had become almost academic as all such operations now came under the control of Werner Baumbach. The Ju 88 is fitted with an alternative short fuse and a long-range tank, suggesting it was intended for use in DRACHENHÖHLE



tacks, was empowered (most conveniently under the circumstances) to speak and to give instructions without question, as if it were Hitler himself. So Speer and Baumbach called for assistance from *Oberst* Knemeyer, who was by this time entirely responsible at the RLM for the procurement of aircraft. At that time KG 200 had to hand only one Ju 290 and access to several B-17s and B-24s. The Kommodore found that Knemeyer was sympathetic to Speer's intentions and was willing (provided he was given sealed orders to demonstrate his ignorance of the plan) to make another Ju 290 at Oranienburg available.

The OKL recorded that the *Fliegerführer* 200 (Baumbach) had not been located for 14 days and that he had contributed nothing in his capacity as 'Supreme Commander for Bridge Attack'. To those who knew of his movements, he was supposedly engaged in preparing schemes to rationalise the use of the Luftwaffe's diminishing resources, in consultation with the other two conspirators. Speer, meanwhile, made arrangements for six field ambulances to be put at his disposal.

Speer hoped for the support of *Gen* Adolf Galland, the fighter leader, but was unable to make contact with him in southern Germany, so he turned to *General der Panzer-Truppen* Thomale to see if a sufficient number of trustworthy (the word seems a little out of place in this situation) soldiers might be found to carry through the kidnap plan. The Panzer General required time to consider, for discovery would be disastrous and fatal, but it is not clear whether he was willing to give Speer the help he requested for the Minister appears, at this late stage, to have lost heart or self-confidence and abandoned the scheme, instead relying on members of the Reichs Government surrendering to the Western Allies.

As 'Supreme Commander for Bridge Attacks' Baumbach had the authority to use any personnel or weapons that he might think fit. Thus he acquired a number of Hs 293 radio-controlled guided bombs for use in his 'special operations'. *Einsatzkommando* 200 (FK) Do 217 and He 111 aircraft were fitted for air-launching these weapons. He was also allowed to obtain the *Sommerballon* and *Winterballon* floating mines and to employ Army Engineers and the manned torpedoes of the *Kleinkampfmittel-Verband*. For all operations against bridge crossings *Oberst* Joachim Helbig was appointed his deputy, responsible to Luftflotte 6 on 6 March 1945 in command of a 'Gefechtsverband' (Task Force) Helbig'.

One may be forgiven for believing that *Oberst* Baumbach no longer felt interest or responsibility for his Geschwader but this was not the case. In his multiple roles it is clear that, having no doubt that the defeat of Germany was imminent, he saw little or no point in further risking the lives of his men (even if fuel for their aircraft were available). A major concern was the fear of a breakdown of morale such as had occurred at the end of the Great War, a concern apparently shared by the Staff of Luftflotte 6, demonstrated by their devolving 'operational responsibility' for the 'Destruction of Bridges' entirely upon *Oberst* Helbig who, despite all the difficulties of supply and the probable outcome, still proposed a 'last

ditch' effort, a 'grand self-sacrifice mission' far removed from the original intentions of Lange's Leonidas Staffel.

With the authority of the Luftflotte, *Oberst* Helbig was given command of the Stab of I. Lehr (Operational Training) Gruppe, moved to Treuenbrietzen, and the II./LG 1 with a strength of 30 Ju 88 A-4s. He also had the ability to call for numbers of older Bf 109 and Fw 190 aircraft in addition to the missile launchers of the II./KG 200 and a number of Mistel composites. On paper the potential aircraft strength appeared formidable but the reality was somewhat less so, offering only slight chance of slowing down the Red Army's drive in the north as envisaged by Hitler who had reserved the right to give an order for a 'self-sacrifice' attack. Helbig led four escorted He 111s from Burg the following day to attack one of the bridges at Goritz, where he launched a Hs 293 to score the only hit. Task Force Helbig now incorporated special units assembled for EISENHAMMER including a Kommando des Erprobungsstellen (KdE), made up of test-pilots experienced with the 'experimental' weapon. In the West, the US First Army captured the Ludendorff Bridge across the Rhine at Remagen on 7 March. Immediately Fw 190 fighter bombers began attacks to destroy the bridge. Nine Fw 190G-1s of II./KG 200 were detached from Twente to Frankfurt Rhein-Main to attack by night on 9 and 10 March with 1,000 kg bombs, but the bridge remained standing. After a series of raids and several hits by other bomber Staffeln, the structure collapsed on 17 March, too late to prevent the US 1st Army exploiting its bridgehead across the river.

The first Mistel attack by Task Force Helbig was against the Oder bridges at Goritz on 8 March, the force consisting of four Mistel composites with five Ju 188s and two Ju 88s as escort for the small attacking force. It was noted that part of the southern bridge appeared to be destroyed but the damage was insufficient to halt the build-up of a Soviet bridgehead. The next recorded attacks were made on 21 March when six He 111 and four Do 217s of the Versuchskommando/KG 200 struck the Oder bridges at Goritz yet again. Two days later bridges at Goritz and Neurathstock were unsuccessfully attacked when no bombs were released "due to technical failures". Another three days passed before the next attacks — again only two hits were recorded.

During an attack on the Goritz bridges on 13 March a Heinkel was hit by the remarkably accurate Soviet anti-aircraft fire — four were killed and two of the crew wounded. Another He 111 was hit on 22 March, but returned to base with one man killed.

During the following week sporadic sorties were flown but with no effective results, such that on 28 March Baumbach sent to the Luftwaffenstab and to the other Headquarters a signal pointing out that Mistel action against temporary bridges was wasteful and proposed that only permanent bridges should be attacked, using tried and trusted methods of attack by manned aircraft. The point was emphasised a day later when only one hit could be recorded from the use of six composites attacking the Russian-held Steinau rail bridge.



The Gefechtsverband Helbig, equipped with nine He 111s and a Do 217, all carrying Hs 293 missiles, carried out further bridge attacks on 13, 20, 22, 23, 25 and 26 March. Four He 111s again made hits on 25 March, one on the bridge Goritz-Nord, one on Goritz-Süd. The same day 22 additional Ju 88s were attached to KG 200. At this time 5./KG 200 maintained 27 serviceable Ju 88s and 188s, but 6./KG 200 had only two operational Mistel IIs and three Mistel IIIs. The He 111s and Do 217s of Einsatzkommando 200 made a final attack on the Oder bridges at Goritz and Lebus on 26 March, achieving only one hit at Lebus.

Gefechtsverband Helbig carried out another attack on the last day of March. Six Mistel Is and four bombers from Burg were escorted by 24 Bf 109s of JG 52 to destroy the rail bridge at Steinau, but only three Misteln attacked the target and made one certain hit. Two of the old Bf 109 controlling aircraft suffered engine-failure and released their bomber components before reaching the target. Five more Fw 190-Mistel composites were sent against the Vistula bridges at Warsaw on 8 April, but none of these attacks could prevent or delay the final Soviet offensive against Berlin.

It seems that a number of other Mistel attacks, some in combination with dive-bombing, were made in March but no records remain. The disappointing results of the use of the new weapon were at last recognised by the OKL and, on 12 April, the Gefechtsverband Helbig was relieved of its duties with Luftflotte 6 and transferred to the Luftflotten-Kommando Nord Ost for action against different targets. In the light of the evidence, the text of a signal from the OKL dated 19 April seems unreal:

*"1. During the battles in the Neisse or Oder sector in the last two days, the enemy advance was made possible only by his suffering very high losses in human and material terms.*

*2. An uninterrupted supply is therefore crucial to the enemy. An immediate interruption in supplies could at this moment still make it possible to turn the tide. 3. LfL. Kdo 6 is asking therefore to carry on with the destruction of the Weichsel bridges as soon as the weather permits".*

Meanwhile the 10. Staffel (III./KG 200) lost more Fw 190s to accurate Soviet anti-aircraft fire — those of Lt Gering ('Black 7'), Fw Massel and Uffz Stimmler ('Black 4' and '2') on 6 April over Stoltzenau on the Weser; all the pilots being killed.

On 10 April a mixed assembly of Mistel, some with Bf 109, others with Fw 190 control aircraft, was heavily bombed at Rechlin-Larz which had previously escaped serious attack. These aircraft may have been from the 'provisional' Mistel unit KG 101 but according to *Oberstab-Ing.* Tilenius they were under command of the 'Fliegerführer 200'. Eighteen of the main EISENHAMMER force were destroyed.

Baumbach was summoned by Himmler to his headquarters at Gustrow where he was told that negotiations through the offices of Count Folke Bernadotte (Deputy Chairman of the Swedish Red Cross) were in progress

and was asked if aircraft could be made available for transport to Sweden. Baumbach assured Himmler that transport aircraft remained at stand-by.

On 26 April, units of the US and Red Armies met at Torgau on the Elbe, dividing Wehrmacht-held territory in two. The following day Hitler was told of Himmler's attempted negotiations.

Any possibility of the SO men being employed as first intended having been abandoned, Hanna Reitsch had virtually appointed herself personal pilot to *Gen* Robert Ritter von Greim, C-in-C Luftflotte 6. When called to the Chancellery, he planned that Reitsch should fly him to Berlin by means of a Focke-Achgelis FA 223 *Drache* (Dragon) helicopter, one of which aircraft remained at Rechlin and on which Reitsch had flying experience. It was certainly fortunate that she had been a test-pilot for many types, considering the variety of aircraft she was to pilot during the days that followed; presumably from those held by the E-Stelle or those brought together by Baumbach for his 'Regierungsstaffel'. She and von Greim arrived at Rechlin on the night of 25/26 April, only to find that the helicopter had been damaged by Allied action, so they required a pilot who had already flown to and from Berlin to take them to Gatow, in an Fw 190 with a 'pick-a-back' position behind the pilot's seat. (In fact in the rear fuselage, entry being gained by means of an in-built access hatch which was not infrequently used to transport braver war photographers and, *in extremis*, ground crew). Reitsch was duly squeezed into the rear fuselage and they set off, with an escort cover of 40 fighters. From Gatow they continued with von Greim at the controls of a Fieseler *Storch* to land by the Brandenburger Tor, although he was wounded in the leg by ground-fire.

Hitler told the couple of his intentions and promoted von Greim as *Feldmarschall* and appointed him Commander-in-Chief of the Luftwaffe on the 29th. He gave orders that von Greim should return to Rechlin and despatch "every available aircraft" to attack Soviet troops around the Chancellery, then to continue northwards to arrest Himmler.

Clearly these instructions could not be carried out, but under fire, Reitsch flew von Greim out in an Arado Ar 96 concealed in a blast pen near the Brandenburger Tor, first to Rechlin, then in a Bü 181 *Bestmann* to inform Dönitz at his Plön headquarters. Von Greim insisted on flying southwards to *Generalfeldmarschall* Ferdinand Schoerner's HQ at Königgratz. Schoerner was notorious for his loyalty to Hitler and his harsh treatment of so-called 'deserters' in the Wehrmacht. After treatment for von Greim's injuries, sustained on the earlier flight to Berlin, on 7 May Reitsch flew him by Do 217 to Graz and, with the aircraft damaged by flak, crash-landed at the edge of the airfield.

As already noted, Helbig had suggested a 'grand self-sacrifice mission' to destroy a number of Oder bridges, simultaneously 'swamping' the Soviet anti-aircraft capability. Now, it seems, the Commanding General of the I. Fliegerkorps, *Gen* Paul Deichmann, also called upon his pilots to volunteer for similar self-destructive missions,



although he had no authority from the Führer to do so.

At the same time, perhaps realising at last the difficulty and danger (from both adversaries for the flak units were notoriously trigger-happy as well as accurate) Speer looked for an alternative to escape by air.

Doubtless Speer's Ministry representative in Hamburg, Wolf knew, as did other senior Nazis of Speer's plans or some interpretation of his intentions. Baumbach sent Maj Beegor to *Gauleiter* Kaufmann in Hamburg to see if he could provide a 'Kriegsfischkutter' or some other kind of vessel as a means of avoiding early capture by the Western Allies.

The KFK was a 24-metre boat based on a design of a fishing-boat, not unlike those armed trawlers used by the Royal Navy for similar duties, principally inshore convoy protection and policing. The usual armament was either a 3.7 cm gun or a 2.0 cm Flak or 2.0 cm anti-aircraft guns, one mounted on a foredeck platform, the other abaft the bridge. These boats had generous between-decks accommodation and two were at that time used by the Abwehr and one for training sabotage diving teams along the Norwegian coast. Either would have been suitable for any journey proposed by Speer to Greenland, for instance, capable of a range of 1,700 km at seven knots constant speed.

In the event, nothing more was heard of this project.

## The Will

Goebbels questioned Baumbach about his immediate plans for the SO men when the machines were ready at Prenzlau, but Baumbach, it seems, avoided any definite answer, having devolved operational responsibilities onto Maj Wilhelm Kuschke, supposedly involving himself only in their training.

In his final Will, Hitler expelled Göring from the Party and cancelled his military rank and privileges. In his place *Gross-Adm* Karl Dönitz was named Reichspräsident and Oberbefehlshaber der Wehrmacht, to assume these functions on 1 May. Himmler also was expelled from the Party

and accused of treason, a far more appropriate use of the term than when applied to Göring's over-keen and misunderstood action at a time when communications were broken between himself and the Führer's headquarters. A new Government was to be headed by Goebbels as Chancellor, with Dönitz as Minister for War, but the situation was changed by Goebbels's decision to remain with Hitler until the end.

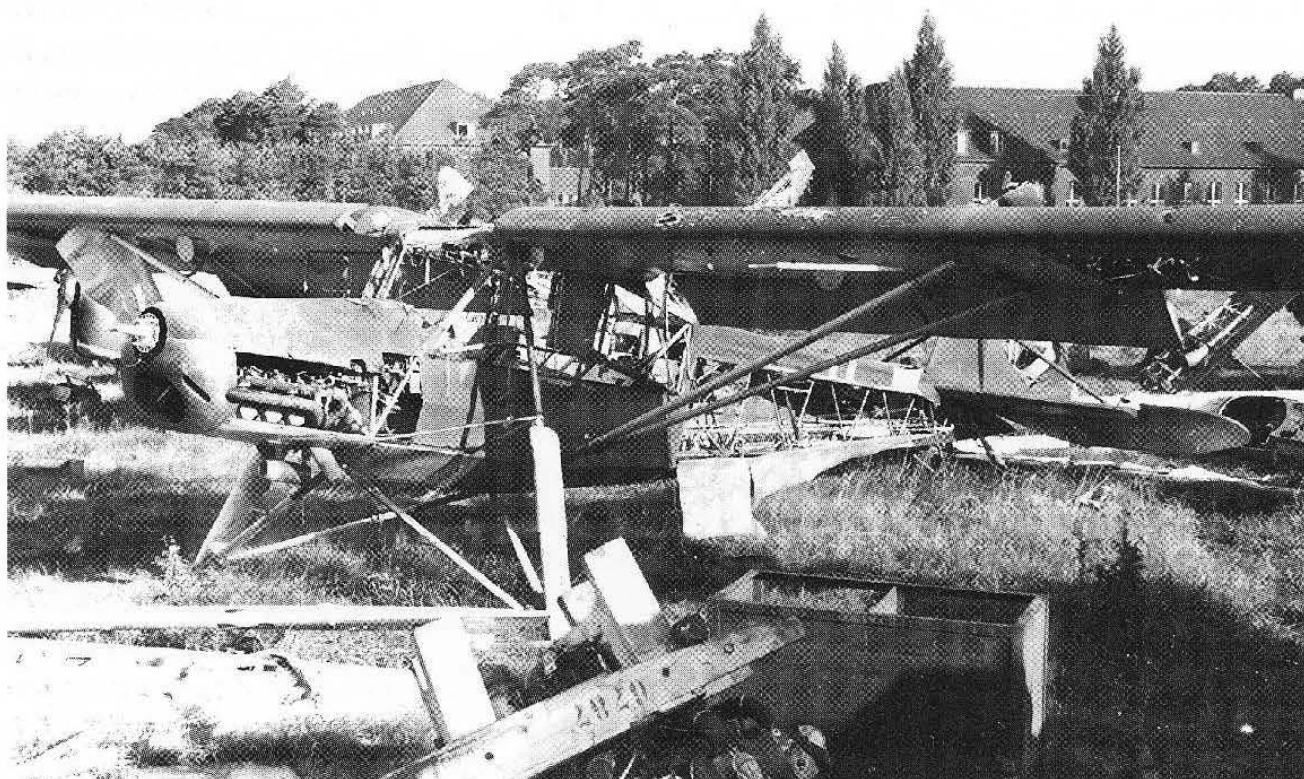
One of seven couriers sent out from the Bunker on 29 April carried a copy of the Will and the Hitler/Braun marriage certificate, for Dönitz at Flensburg. On hearing that a courier was on his way, the Admiral ordered a floatplane to pick him up from the Havel River, just in advance of the Russian forces. The courier, Heinz Lorenz of the Propaganda Ministry, reached the east bank and rowed out to tell the pilot that there were two other messengers waiting. The aircraft came under fire and, when Lorenz fell into the water, the pilot took off. Lorenz was captured by the Soviets, but the other couriers disappeared.

Reitsch and von Greim left the Bunker on 29 April, knowing of Hitler's intentions as Baur recorded, "I have given Bormann several messages for Dönitz — make sure that you get Bormann out of Berlin and to Dönitz by plane from Rechlin" — and "You must take responsibility that the bodies of my wife and myself are burned so that my enemies do not have the same mischief with me as was done with Mussolini". News of the execution and the public display of the bodies of the ex-Duce and his mistress, Clara Petacci, had just been announced.

## Albert Speer

The former Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop came to the airfield at Kaltenkirchen, near Hamburg, having somehow obtained the use of an aircraft to fly him to Bavaria. He alleged that he was empowered to speak on behalf of Hitler who would be travelling to the south. Hearing of this, Baumbach and Knemeyer pressed upon Albert Speer the need for discussion with Ribbentrop.

**184:** Found abandoned at Gatow after the war had ended, could this unidentified Fieseler Fi 156 Storch have been used to transport high-ranking officers of the Nazi regime in the comings and goings from the Führerbunker?





23 April was a busy day at the Führerbunker. Karl-Hermann Frank, Reichsprotektor of Bohemia and Moravia, was flown into Berlin with a scheme to diminish German authority and withdraw troops from the former Czechoslovakia, then to set up an anti-Communist 'National Government', hoping that the country's armaments and other industries might be saved from Allied bombing. Speer also visited Hitler for a brief meeting and was greatly disturbed to find that *Frau* Goebbels was determined that her children should die with her when the military situation became hopeless. He also requested Hitler's approval for the 'directors' (presumably meaning also the senior engineers) of the Skoda industry to be removed from the danger of capture by the Russians by flying them to Paris. Quite by chance, as he left, Ribbentrop arrived and in secret they discussed the matter, Ribbentrop acceding to Speer's wishes and giving him full authority for the flight. Speer requested an aircraft from Baumbach who noted cryptically, 'Helicopter by Storch to Berlin, courier service', presumably the means by which private messages could be sent to Frank in Prague of Hitler's approval to this rather hazardous plan. Frank was told that a Siebel 10-seat communications aeroplane would land at Prague-Ruzyně a little before midnight (presumably 25 or 26 April) and must leave before 04.00 hours the following day. A Siebel 204A transport duly arrived; this was A3+LB of the I./KG 200, re-marked D-SNAY as a civil aircraft for the occasion, in case it should be intercepted by Allied fighters on its way across southern Germany and into France. At Ruzyně it caused some interest among the Luftwaffe personnel, but no explanation was given for its presence. Speer, of course, had further ideas — instead of flying Ribbentrop to Bavaria, to fly him to England in Speer's Ju 88 flown by the 'confidential' pilot *Oblt* Home of the 'Sonderkommando Baumbach'. The flight was planned for the following day, but was cancelled because of bad weather in the West.

GFM Albert Kesselring (OB West) and Ferdinand Schoerner (appointed to the thankless and impossible task of commanding the diminished Army Group defending Berlin) were to be informed of the Czech flight. This alone might suggest that the story of the Czech industrialists was a fiction, concealing an opportunity for Hitler to leave Berlin and, possibly, Germany. It seems that Kesselring never received the message — but no such flight took place. The Siebel was soon afterwards in use in Schleswig-Holstein.

From the events linking Baumbach and Speer, it is clear that the two were close confidants, if not friends. Speer even sent official signals to Baumbach, addressing him as 'Dear Winnetou' and, in return, Baumbach called the Arms Minister 'Old Shatterhand', both names derived from characters in the Wild West fiction by a popular writer, Ernst May, with which (like thousands of romantically-inclined Germans) both the conspirators were familiar.

Albert Speer, like his leader, was a fantasist — but for him and for Baumbach to believe that the firing of flares over Berlin could be the first step in the kidnapping of

Government ministers was surely stretching fantasy to its limits.

The RSHA was fully aware of the distrust between the Soviet Union and the Western Powers and of the likely political problems that would arise between them as the war progressed.

In July 1944, when German efforts to prevent a build-up of the Anglo-American forces in Normandy were obviously failing, Göring and *Feldmarschall* Kesselring discussed the possibility arising of a retreat into the homeland. They considered a situation in which German forces from the West and from Italy might be withdrawn to defend an impregnable mountain redoubt in Southern Bavaria and Tirol. There, from a position of strength, they might reach an armistice with the Western Allies so that, with an end to the British and American bombing of Germany's industry, they could turn the Wehrmacht totally against the Red Army. Nothing came of the proposal for several months.

As the Red Army and Eisenhower's Allied Expeditionary Force closed in on the borders of Germany, *Reichsführer*-SS Heinrich Himmler, Commander of the Ersatz-Armee ('Home Army'), ordered the incorporation of units of the Volkssturm, the equivalent of the British Home Guard, into regular formations for the defence of the Homeland. SS *Obergruppenführer* Ernst Kaltenbrunner, Head of the RSHA, instructed Skorzeny to develop an organisation, largely made up of Hitler Youth, to carry out guerrilla operations and sabotage.

Meanwhile, others at the OKW were looking at the military situation realistically. *Gen-Maj* Pflaum, with his considerable understanding of the difficulties that might face any resistance organisation, hoped to prepare a scheme for setting up an 'underground army' in the case of a German defeat. It was reported that the plan threw Hitler into a frenzy but the basis for such an army was formed with the cover-name 'Werewolf' with SS *Obergruppenführer* Hans Pritzmann as its Commander-in-Chief and Pflaum appointed as his Chief of Staff.

The proposal to establish a 'Nationale Redoute' had remained in being throughout the Wehrmacht retreats in the East, West and in Italy; now the idea was again put forward and into practice by Franz Hofe, *Gauleiter* of Tirol-Voralberg. Elaborating upon fanciful Swiss newspaper reports of an Alpine Fortress extending from the Swiss frontier to Linz in Austria, Goebbels's Propaganda Ministry 'leaked' information that persuaded US Army Intelligence of German preparations for a determined stand in the South; thus Himmler (designated Ersatz-Führer to succeed Hitler) hoped to negotiate with the Western Allies from a position of apparent strength: Werewolfkommandos would, if necessary, provide armed cover for withdrawal of the Government from Berlin.

In February 1945, Himmler ordered Kaltenbrunner to move the greater part of the RSHA departments to Bad Aussee, near Hitler's Berchtesgaden retreat, and take command of the area. No troops could yet be spared for the Alpenfestung (Alpine Fortress), but a southern defensive line was already prepared, from Bolzano to Klagenfurt,



intended to be manned by the German Army Group C withdrawing northwards from Italy and Army Group E from Yugoslavia. Work had begun on defences along Austria's western frontier and V-1 launching sites were reported by the Americans as under construction. More than this, trainloads of technicians were being moved from the secret factories in the Harz to begin construction of V-weapons in the south, a dangerous prospect.

On 25 March a US Seventh Army Intelligence Study warned of 80 units of 'élite troops' deployed for the defence of the Alpenfestung. Swiss and British Intelligence discounted such reports, for which there was no confirmation from reconnaissance. In spite of 'negative evidence' HQ SHAEF was convinced that a German military stand was a reality, to protect and support use of the V-weapons to be manufactured by technicians hurriedly moved to the south. The US Army's nervousness was not entirely misplaced for, following the gradual evacuation of the Berlin ministries, government offices were set up in the area south of Erfurt (some 14,000 people in staff support echelons!). It was reported that a new Führer HQ was to be built underground in the guise of an industrial complex (for it may indeed have constructed V-2s) code-named 5-3, to the west of Arnstadt.

**185 Above right:** Albert Speer, a brilliant but amoral organiser, in his role as Minister for Armaments trying out a tank for size



**186 Right:** The capable but weak-willed Robert Ritter von Greim won the Pour le Mérite in October 1918 as a fighter pilot and commander of the Bavarian Jasta 34. A friend of both Göring and Ernst Udet, at the outbreak of the Second World War, he commanded V Fliegerkorps. After gaining the Ritterkreuz with Oakleaves and Swords, on 29 April 1945 he was appointed by Hitler to succeed Göring as the last C-in-C of the Luftwaffe. Injured on the way to see Hitler after an epic flight with Hanna Reitsch, he committed suicide while in hospital in Salzburg on 24 May 1945



**187:** Hans Baur was a long-time friend and supporter of Adolf Hitler and served as Hitler's chief pilot for some thirteen years. This picture was taken in 1932 and shows both Hitler and Baur (in leather flying suit). Baur remained loyal to the end. For his pains he spent ten years in Soviet prisons after he broke out from the Führer bunker on 2 May 1945, only to be wounded and captured







## MÜLLER'S SECRETS

### The last days of Hitler

By the beginning of 1945 the defeat of Germany was a certainty. In January the Soviet Army stood on the line of the Vistula and, in the north, had cleared the Germans from all of the Baltic States except for the Courland Peninsula. On the Ukrainian Front, Russian forces encircled Budapest. While operations in Italy had been closed down for the winter on a line from Carrara to Ravenna, on the Western Front, the Allies had completely reoccupied France and Belgium and, following the repulse of the German Ardennes offensive, 'Wacht am Rhein', were facing the 'West Wall' along the German frontier.

On 16 January Adolf Hitler arrived in Berlin to establish his last field headquarters in a deep air-raid shelter, the Führerbunker, beneath the Reichs Chancellery garden, from where he ineffectually directed operations on the Eastern and Western fronts.

By mid-April the Red Army was up to the Oder, 75 miles from Berlin, and the US Ninth Army had reached the Elbe, only 100 km from the capital. A hasty plan to provide for the defence of Berlin was put into effect, SS *Brigadeführer* Wilhelm Mohnke's Kampfgruppe manning the Berlin 'Zitadelle'.

At this time, despite enormous losses, the Wehrmacht still controlled a strip of territory stretching from Schleswig-Holstein to the Italian border. All contact between the Stab/KG 200 and their Kommodore ended during the first week of April when Baumbach became deeply involved with Reichsminister Albert Speer, who sent for Baumbach and openly discussed with him a scheme to abduct Hitler and Bormann.

On 11 April, the Geschwader Staff, under the command

of the Operations Officer, *Maj* Harnier, began moving southwards by a series of steps — from Berlin-Gatow to Stendal, to Oschatz, Pilsen, Straubing, Holzkirchen, Oberwarngau and Taubenberg-Reitham at the end of the month. On 12 April the Luftwaffe Staff instructed the II./KG 200 to fly all serviceable aircraft from Burg to Tutow-Süd and to hand over the Beleuchter aircraft of the 5./KG 200 to Gefechtsverband Helbig. A week later the personnel of the Gruppe were assigned to ground-defence duties at Burg.

By the third week of April the Red Army was across the Oder and only 27 km from Berlin, the British 2nd Army was up to the Elbe, Stendal was occupied, Burg threatened and Altenburg had been overrun by the US First Army. The Oberkommando der Wehrmacht moved from Berlin to Neuruppin, some 64 km to the north-west on 20 April, to be divided in two when Hitler established a new Northern Command at Eupen, north of Lübeck in Schleswig-Holstein. There *Gross-Adm* Dönitz took command on 20 April.

By 20 April, his 56th birthday, Hitler was seemingly still undecided if he should move his headquarters to his Berghof in the 'Alpenfestung', the unfinished Nationale

**188 Above:** Hptm Heinz Braun's well-used Ju 290A-4, W.Nr. 0165, first flew in September 1943 and saw extensive service with I./KG 200. Allocated the official KG 200 *Verbands-kennzeichen* A3+HB, it apparently never carried any other marking than the *Stammkennzeichen* PI+PS, inaccurately applied as PJ+PS. After capture by American forces, it received the nose art seen in the picture above. After being flown to the USA it was scrapped in 1946. An explosive charge, apparently placed by Czech resistance forces, was found concealed in the starboard wing at this time



Redoute in Southern Bavaria and Tirol. That day, the High Command left Berlin. Dönitz was appointed commander in the north, with headquarters at Plön in Schleswig-Holstein. Another headquarters under Gen Winter was set up at Bad Reichenhall near Berchtesgaden, where Hitler was expected to arrive on 22 April.

The Führer had already approved a proposal by his 'secretary', *Reichsleiter* Martin Bormann, to send state documents and the junior Chancellery staff by air to the south.

That week the defenders of Berlin were virtually encircled by the Red Army and the only contact with other areas under Wehrmacht control was by radio and by light aircraft from an airstrip cleared under Baur's direction near the Brandenburger Tor. Baur pressed Hitler to escape to Rechlin throughout the week, to fly to Manchuria or to Spain, but Hitler seemed determined to stay in the Bunker.

As the military situation became desperate, dissension in the higher echelons of the Nazi Party came into the open. Göring, Hitler's appointed successor, fell immediately from favour when he most reasonably proposed taking over the leadership if Hitler decided to remain isolated in Berlin. He had left for Berchtesgaden on 21 April, declaring that if he received no contrary instruction from the Führer by the night of the 23rd he would assume control. Quite wrongly convinced that Göring was a traitor, Hitler dismissed him from his post as commander of the diminished and largely ineffective Luftwaffe on 23 April.

The II. and III. Gruppen of KG 200 and the Versuchskommando had been officially disbanded on 22 April but the Geschwaderstab, in transit to Taubenberg, found it impossible to pass on the orders from OKL to the Gruppen. The I./KG 200 remained in being under the command of Randel-Semper, to continue a few agent drops and more particularly to maintain aircraft on standby for the removal of Party members and documents. He remained in contact with elements of the 1. Staffel in Southern Germany (i.e. including the annexed territories of Austria and Czechoslovakia) and with the 3./KG 200 on the island of Rugen. RSHA Amt VI, for which Randel-Semper had arranged air operations, had already left Berlin, many of its SS personnel deserting — so much for their oaths to the Führer. From this time on, the Geschwader's relationship with the RSHA became even more tenuous and aircrew awaited orders to use their aircraft as transport for the crumbling Governmental departments and instructions from Werner Baumbach.

The historian, Hugh Trevor-Roper, wrote the supposedly definitive book *The Last Days of Hitler* while the memories of those to whom he was allowed access were still fresh. For practical purposes the story he told remains true, as does the content of J.P.O'Donnel's *The Berlin Bunker*, senior officers forming an audience for the Führer/Commander-in-Chief's explanations of imaginary situations and plans. An acutely observed description of the situation came from the interrogations of *Flugkapitän* Hanna Reitsch, despite her hero-worship for Adolf Hitler and belief in his military foresight. Few of the people

in the Führerbunker had a clear idea of what was happening above and around them in beleaguered Berlin, nor had they much knowledge of the military situation in the rest of Germany.

Some of the secondary airfields occupied by outstations of KG 200 were no more than levelled grass-surfaced fields such as would be classed as 'emergency landing grounds' by the British Air Ministry. The small nose wheel of the B-24 Liberator was put under severe stress when taking off or landing with the aircraft heavily loaded; the aircraft was consequently disliked by the German pilots and, in the hands of KG 200, was used primarily to transport heavy or bulky material between major airfields with metalled runways or hard-standing areas. Consequently the few Liberators flown by the Geschwader were little used for agent insertions, their activities confined almost entirely to transporting materiel and men from Wien-Aspern and Schwechat to Rhodes, cut off by seas from the ports of northern Greece and the Balkan countries. By March 1945, only one B-24, KO+XA, was serviceable in the north where the B-17s provided the principal operational usage. This aircraft of the 389th Bomber Sqn, which had been forced to land with engine trouble after a raid on Stettin, 20 June 1944, was unusual in bearing no codes on the fuselage sides, merely the Stammkennzeichen beneath the wings and the American serial, as W.Nr. 41-28779.

By early April of 1945, I./KG 200's situation had become critical. Fuel was in short supply and Allied air superiority had halted most of its activities. Soviet troops had pressed their advance to the Oder river and leading elements were not far from Wackersleben. The decision was made to evacuate all aircraft from there to Fürstenfeldbruck in Bavaria to escape the advancing Russians.

The evacuation flight was scheduled for early morning on 6 April 1945. The crews were briefed the previous night and each aircraft would fly to Bavaria singly. *Oblt* Wache, deputy Staffelfkapitän, instructed the crews of the three B-17s, the B-24 and a number of Heinkel He 111s on the best route to Fürstenfeldbruck to avoid anti-aircraft units. It had been impossible to notify the anti-aircraft units of the flight and the crews knew the risk from flak would be great.

At 05.30 hours, as the bombers were prepared for the mission, weather conditions were poor with a ceiling of 550 m. Heavy rain the night before had turned the airfield into a sodden mire.

A crew of four had been allocated to the B-24; pilot *Ofw* Rauchfuss, radio-operator *Ofw* Monkemeyer, engineer *Fw* Lange, and a crew chief. Except for personal belongings and spare parts, no freight could be carried. As the crew boarded the Liberator, they found 29 passengers huddled in the fuselage. The stowaways were soldiers and civilians from the nearby village of Wackersleben, all wanting to escape the advancing Russians.

Attempting a take-off from the muddy field with a lightly-loaded B-24 would be difficult, but with the extra load it would extremely dangerous. At first Rauchfuss re-



fused to take off, but the desperate pleas of the passengers finally changed his mind. Despite his misgivings he managed to take off successfully. Slowly climbing into the clouds, he headed for Braunschweig, the first landmark on the flight to Bavaria. About 25 minutes later, a German flak unit spotted the Liberator and opened fire. Shells exploded near the aircraft, damaging the fuselage, wings and No.4 engine and cut the rudder cables, but Rauchfuss managed to maintain control.

The gunfire had badly wounded two of the passengers who consequently needed urgent medical attention. Rauchfuss began to descend, looking for a suitable landing place. After a few minutes he sighted a field near Quedlinburg, circled twice and lowered the undercarriage. On final approach the crew spotted a high-voltage power line directly in front of the aircraft. With a burst of power the pilot cleared the hazard, but as a result, the aircraft touched down too fast. The Liberator ran into freshly ploughed ground at the far side of the meadow and the nose wheel dug in.

After inspection of the damaged aircraft it was decided it could be repaired. The rudder cables and a broken oil line on No.4 engine were quickly fixed. The nose wheel leg had, however, sustained a broken strut. The leg was removed and sent to the Junkers Component Factory at Eilsleben. Six days later, on 12 April, the nose wheel assembly was returned and the repairs were completed. Take-off was planned for the next morning and two farm tractors were used to tow the Liberator to the end of the improvised runway. The crew removed all unnecessary equipment, including the radios from the B-24 to lighten it but all their work came to nothing. The clearing proved to be too short and as the bomber bogged down in the sodden ground, the nose wheel broke a third time. Reluctantly they decided to destroy the B-24. Holes were punched in the fuel tanks and the crew set fire to the aircraft with a flare pistol.

The crew nevertheless managed to reach Bavaria. On 18 April they were in Muhldorf, their former base, instead of Furstenfeldbruck. For their endeavours they were given a written appreciation. At the same time they were told that only one B-17 had reached the destination. One of

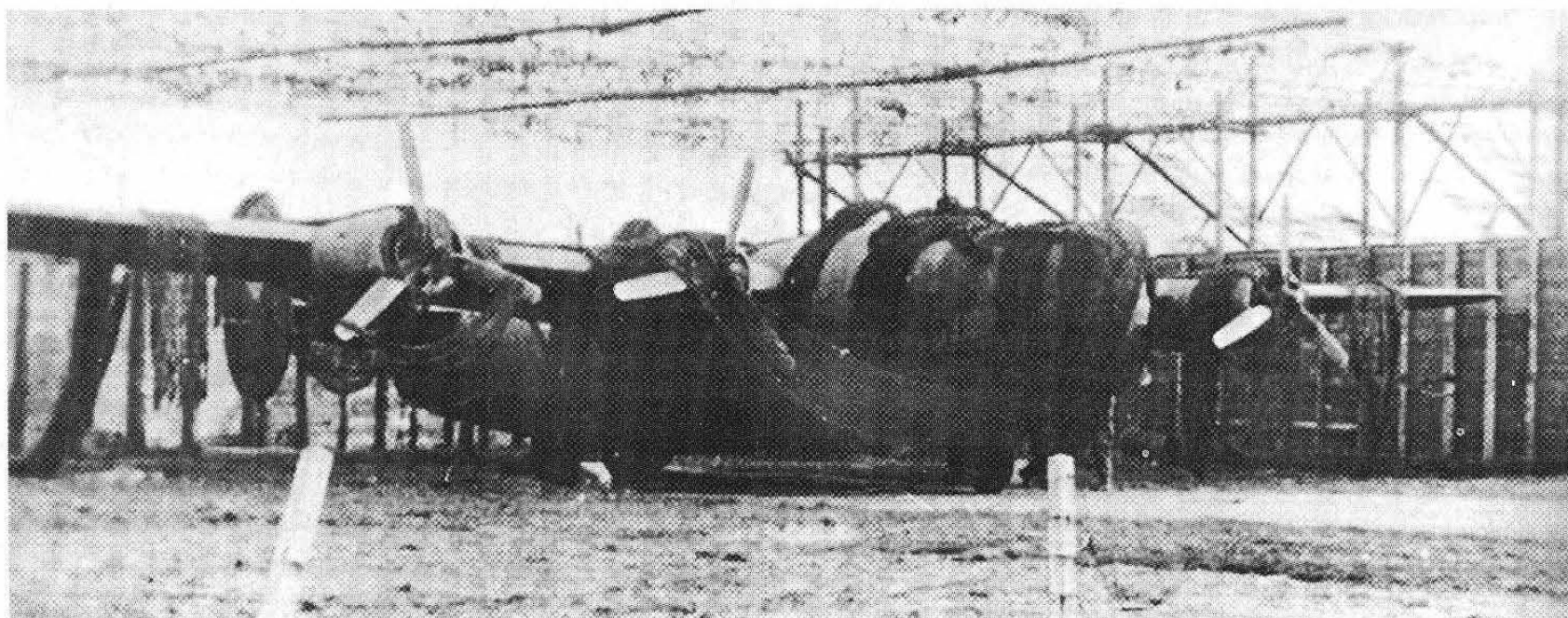
the others had collided with a hill in the Thüringer Wald, another was shot down with no survivors by flak near Altenburg.

Hans-Heiri Stapfer has recorded another B-17 remaining in service. The two Fortresses were at Fürstenfeldbruck, coded A3+EK and A3+AE. Nothing more is noted of A3+EK, but *Maj* Klemm flew the latter on a mission on 22 April and another mission of the 23rd, returning the following day. It is believed that A3+AE carried out KG 200's last operational B-17 flight when the Fortress flew from Wels to Aigen, some 43 km to the south on 2 May 1945.

Not all the captured B-24s were destroyed; 41-28641 of the 453rd BS was recovered by American troops, virtually undamaged, and coded A3+KB at Salzburg in May 1945, having served as a supply aircraft for Rhodes. And that, it seems, was that.

By 20 April most of the Governmental staff had left Berlin by road or by air and Luftwaffe *Oberst* von Below told Albert Speer, during one of his short visits to confer with Hitler, that Martin Bormann and others were still pressing their leader to leave for Berchtesgaden. On Sunday 22 April, he suffered a "nervous breakdown" and at the midday conference at last admitted: "The war is lost." He told his senior generals, Keitel, Jodl, Krebs and Bergdorf — and Bormann — that he would rather commit suicide than fall into the hands of the Russians. Phials of potassium cyanide were made available to all the members of the Bunker crew.

The transfer of authority to the Nationale Redoute continued nevertheless. Early in April, on Bormann's instructions, SS *Oberstufab* Georg Betz, aide to Hitler's pilot, Heinz Baur, began preparing a list of all the junior Chancellery staff who were to be flown out with Government records to the Alpine Fortress. On the night of 22 April he spent time saying goodbye to 40 or 50 civil servants who had been in the Chancellery. Baur had assembled ten transport aircraft at Berlin-Templehof. These were flown to Gatow, for the evacuation, cover-name 'Seraglio'. Nine aircraft took off during the night for München-Riem. Nine of the aircraft kept to schedule but the tenth, a Ju 352A-I *Herkules* flown by *Maj* Friedrich





Gundlfinger, was delayed. According to Baur this was due to an engine fault, but one of those awaiting transport to Bavaria, *Frau Hentschel*, said: "Engine trouble? The delay was in reality caused by workers at Gatow. When they saw us decamping, in a rage they attacked our baggage and spread it all over the runway."

Two of the aircraft, including that of Gundlfinger, carried metal trunks containing Hitler's personal archives intended as a "testament to posterity" under the care of *Fw Wilhelm Arndt*, a young man who had survived serious injuries and was a favourite valet of the Führer. The two aircraft carrying the archives took off at about 05.00 hours on 21 April, heading for Ainring, near Salzburg but en route, low over the Heidenholz Forest, Gundlfinger's Ju 352 clipped the treetops. One of its three engines was wrenched off before it hit the ground and the aircraft, of mixed metal and wood construction, burned fiercely. A farmer from nearby Bernersdorf, supervising Russian and French forced-labourers, heard screams and hammering from the Junkers, but was able to help only the tailgunner who was able to crawl clear. On hearing of the disaster Hitler was devastated by the loss of Arndt, rather than of his archives. It was from this event that the idea was later born of producing forged documents, published as *Hitler's Diaries* in 1983.

It has often been stated that the Nationale Redoute, the Alpenfestung or fortress, was a fiction intended to deceive the Allied commanders. Indeed, the preparations and available troops were insufficient for prolonged defence but an effort was made to establish a line of defence, around the Salzburg area. On 25 April *Gen Winter*, Head of the OKW Southern Operational Staff, appointed *Skorzeny* to command the northern part of the 'fortress' which would take the initial shock of attack. For their part the Americans took this threat of resistance in the south very seriously, although once again photographic reconnaissance revealed the true situation.

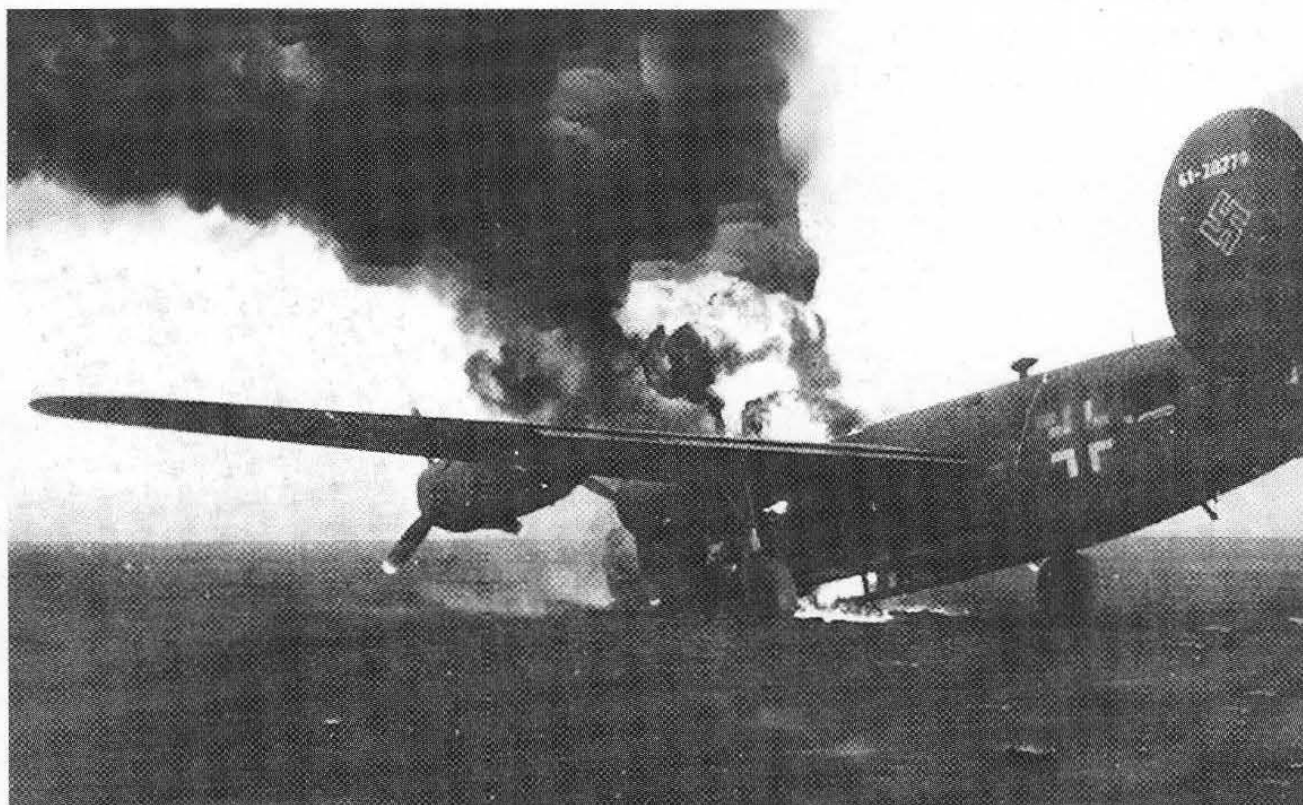
*Gen Wenck*, whose largely intact Twelfth Army had escaped encirclement by the US Army in the Harz,

planned a thrust to relieve the capital, but on the 26th his forces were brought to a halt by the Red Army's drive westwards through Oranienburg to take Brandenburg. Hitler hoped in vain for the Twelfth Army's appearance upon which his 'strategy' relied. There were continual comings and goings at the Chancellery, among them the Goebbels family and Albert Speer. The ever-present Martin Bormann, *Reichsleiter* der NSDAP in succession to Rudolf Hess, acted as 'secretary' to the Führer. He was able to wield great power within the Reich after Hitler took personal command of the Oberkommando des Heeres in December 1941. Although he had no government position and was generally disliked by the others of Hitler's entourage, he was extremely efficient and was able to act as his leader's spokesman on all internal, domestic problems. He continually pressed Hitler to leave for the south but remained in Berlin when Hitler refused. He could have succeeded but for the interference of Goebbels whose histrionics swayed the Leader. Trevor-Roper wrote that Bormann tried to counter the untrustworthy Speer's influence. He allied himself to two of Hitler's other intimates: "Bormann, Fegelein and Burgdorf" said one observer, "formed a close circle around Hitler and it was hardly possible for anyone to penetrate it". It is most likely that Bormann was instrumental in devolving onto Heinrich 'Gestapo' Müller the preparation of a plan for the escape by air of Hitler and favoured members of his entourage to Spain.

As we have seen, relations between the Franco regime in Spain and Germany and the Italian Fascist administration were consistently friendly. Axis aircraft landing inadvertently in Spain were impounded, but their crews were often feted by the German community before they were returned home. A case in point is that of the B-17G which landed at Valencia and was given top-grade security by the Spaniards. Early in 1945, the situation changed as the likelihood of an Axis defeat was recognised by Franco's Government. Air routes between Northern Italy and Barcelona had been maintained by aircrew of

**189 Left:** This is believed to be B-24H 41-28779, Luftwaffe code KO+XA, at Wackersleben in April 1945, shortly before the ill-fated escape flight

**190 Right:** A field near Quedlinburg, 13 April 1945 and KO+XA burns after the nose wheel had collapsed for the last time and the aircraft had become immovable





Deutsche Lufthansa but in March, Spain refused permission for aircraft of the Luftwaffe, or of the Aeronautica Nazionale Republica, the Fascist air force, to enter Spanish air space. A simple subterfuge allowed the Axis Powers to fly people of importance (i.e. 'diplomats') documents and cargoes of value into Spain, the markings of the aircraft being altered for the occasion. In April, however, the Spanish Government decided that Axis civil aircraft should be excluded. The Germans simply ignored the restriction.

On 6 April 1945, a civilian-registered Ju 290A-5, W.Nr. 110178, D-AITR, *Bayern*, landed (and was damaged) at Barcelona, an event that later caused concern among those who believed that Hitler and his bride were flown to safety in this aircraft. This is one of the actions the writer has called 'Flights of Fancy' because it was supposed that *Hptm* Heinz Braun was the pilot. In fact the aircraft was flown by *Flugkapitän* Suzalek of DLH. Requests to the Spanish authorities for details of passengers and cargo on this flight have, however, produced no reply.

As the Third Reich collapsed, Martin Bormann arranged and meticulously recorded the deposit of a great quantity of money and valuables into foreign banks, some of it transported via Spain; this treasure could be recovered by the SS after the inevitable defeat of Germany for use by an escape organisation which was to become known as ODESSA. The ill-informed have associated this

assignment with the flight of D-AITR or some secret, unrecorded, flight to Spain. So much for the explanation of the background to what might have become the most important and famous of all operations by KG 200.

A list of people to be flown out of Germany was apparently prepared by SS *Gruppenführer* Heinrich Müller, Head of the RSHA IV (Gestapo), almost certainly on instructions from Martin Bormann, rather than the RSHA chief, Himmler, who by then had other interests in mind.

The order, dated 20 April, was headed 'Führer Special Flight to Barcelona', with copies intended for *Oberst* Baumbach and *Maj* Koch, *Gruppenkommandeur* of II./KG 200. The passengers were listed, including Bormann, Fegelein, Burgdorf and the organiser, Müller, (a close friend of Fegelein) who were all to be taken care of.

Two days prior to this, *Hptm* Braun, *Staffelkapitän* of I./KG 200 and, perhaps, the most experienced pilot on long-range flights, had received orders to fly his trusty Ju 290, W.Nr. 0165, to Hörsching, near Linz in Austria, to receive a 'delegation' of important people and fly them to Barcelona, the order passed to him verbally by *Maj iG* Joachim Bellmann, as Intelligence Staff Officer of the Luftflotte.

The intended "group of passengers" was to be designated by the C-in-C West (ie *GFM* Albert Kesselring, commanding all forces opposing the Western Allies). Bellmann understood (or pretended to believe) that the

**191:** A facsimile of the 'Special Flight' order of 21 April 1945, prepared by Heinrich Müller, head of the Gestapo. The names are: Hitler

The Goebbels family  
Reichsleiter Bormann  
SS Gruppenführer Müller  
SS Gruppenführer Fegelein  
(Himmler's 'man in Berlin'  
and soon brother-in-law to  
the Führer)

General Burgdorf  
Ambassador Hewel (Rib-  
bentrop's representative)  
SS Oberstuf Betz (Aide to  
Hans Baur)

SS Stuf Dr Stumpfegger  
(Hitler's physician)

SS Hauptstuf Gross  
Fraulein Eva Braun  
Fraulein Manzialy (Hitler's  
vegetarian cook)

Seven men of the Führer-  
Begleitkommando (Hitler's  
bodyguard)

**192 Right:** Heinrich Müller  
28 April 1900-1983. Catho-  
lic, non-Nazi, ruthless Head  
of the Gestapo and unre-  
pentant to the last

**Ame Kommandofache**

**Heinrich Müller**  
H-Gruppenführer  
Generalkommandant des Polizei

**Chef-Sache**  
Nur durch Offizier

Berlin, am 20. April 1945

3 Ausfertigungen  
2 Ausfertigung.

**Betr.: Führersonderreise nach Barcelona**

1. Der Führer und seiner Begleitung verläßt dem Flugplatz Hörsching am 26.4.1945 um 20.00 Uhr.

2. Hierzu befinden sich in der Begleitung des Führers:

Der Führer  
Reichsminister Dr. Goebbels  
Frau Goebbels und Kinder (6)  
Reichsleiter Bormann  
SS-Gruppenführer Müller  
SS-Gruppenführer Fegelein  
General der Infanterie Burgdorf  
Botschafter zBV Hewel  
SS-Oberstuf. Betz  
SS-Stuf. Dr. Stumpfegger  
SS-Hauptstuf. Gross  
Frl. Braun  
Frl. Manzialy

4 Mann Begleitkdo (RSD) 43

Das Gepäck vorstehend genannt Herren ist bis 16.00 Uhr vor der Kommandantur Flugplatz Hörsching abzugeben.

**Verteiler:**

Oberst Baumbach, Chef der Regierungsstaffel 1. Ausf.  
I./K.G. 200 Kdr. 2. Ausf.  
Reichsleiter Bormann 3. Ausf.

SS-Gruppenführer  
Amtschef IV RSHA



passengers were Vichy Government members, who had been lodged at Sigmaringen, which was taken by the US 1st Army a week before; this information he passed on to Braun who remained on stand-by, unaware of events unfolding in Berlin. (In fact a KG 200 B-17 carrying such a group had already crashed in March). No doubt his crew secretly discussed the possibilities behind the order. It is likely that the elusive Baumbach knew nothing of this project, most efficiently arranged by Müller, for Baumbach's copy of the instruction remains, to this day, in Müller's original file.

On 21 April, the day following the issue of the 'Special Flight' order, the attentive Bormann continued his efforts to sway Hitler's views towards a flight to Berchtesgaden and his large staff gathered there — the 'Mountain People' — and he must have seen with satisfaction that his insistence was having an effect for, although Hitler declared: "I shall die in Berlin", this appeared to be more rhetoric than conviction. In a moment of theatricality, the Führer (or so it was reported) declared that he would commit suicide by jumping from an aircraft over the Baltic. Hans Baur, knowing nothing of Müller's plan, pressed Hitler to fly with him to some well-disposed neutral country, but his offer was refused. Both Baur and Bormann remained for the present in the Führerbunker, Baur reporting that large aircraft could no longer use the inner Berlin airfields as all were under artillery fire. The airfields at Rechlin, however, were still relatively safe and large machines could still be flown from there.

Two Fw 200s remained from the Fliegerstaffel des Führers (FdF) with the only Ju 390 long-range transport.

The opportunity for escape was still open but Hitler chose to send Baur away, telling him to arrange for Fallschirmjäger to land for defence of the Chancellery. He declared, "...for myself, I shall stand or fall in Berlin — you can serve my cause much better from outside Berlin."

Hitler held discussions again with his staff about suicide but Baur was carefully instructed to ensure Bormann's safety and to escort him to see Dönitz. Undoubtedly only Bormann would be able to provide the information, known only to him and to his assistant, SS *Stubf* Dr Helmuth von Hummel, about the treasures so prudently invested abroad.

During this crucial period, the somewhat deranged Goebbels came to the Bunker and persuaded Hitler that they both should die by their own hands rather than risk being taken prisoner by the encircling Soviet troops. Goebbels' name was removed from the escape list by someone privy to Hitler's secrets, but the plan appears soon to have been abandoned although the orders to Baumbach and Braun remained on file.

At this point, matters became rather complicated, as members of the Nazi hierarchy began looking to protect their own interests and lives.

Braun flew his aircraft to Hörsching on 18 April, its fuselage bearing its original identity code PJ+PS. It has been stated that the marking should have been PI+PS in line with another eight Ju 290A-3s and A-4s. In fact, as the aircraft had been assigned to KG 200 since August 1944, it should have worn the assigned KG 200 unit code,

**193 Below:** *Hiptm Heinz Braun and his dog, Grosseto 1943*





A3+HB, but apparently it never received this marking. The aircraft, a Ju 290A-4, had been modified from its original form, first by provision for agent dropping then, more recently, by adding to its armament and bringing it up to A-7 standard, alterations which spoiled the sleek lines of the aircraft, but gave it greater defence against the host of Allied fighters that ranged over central and southern Germany from dawn to dusk.

*Hptm* Heinz Braun and his ten-man crew waited at Hörsching aerodrome for the "essential assignment". On the 30th, after a meeting with the Acting Head of Abt Ic (Intelligence), *Maj* Bellmann confirmed Braun's orders in writing and obtained his signature as an acknowledgement of the strict secrecy of the flight plan. The flight was to be made during the next period of suitable weather. This proviso was probably included simply to allow the *Staffelkapitän* to decide for himself when this flight should take place. Early in 1945 there had been some friction between the Kommandos of KG 200 and the RSHA because weather conditions often prevented clandestine operations being undertaken on the required dates. In the event of a return flight from Barcelona being impossible, he was to contact the German Air Attaché in Madrid and place the aircraft at his disposal for possible sale to the Spanish Government.

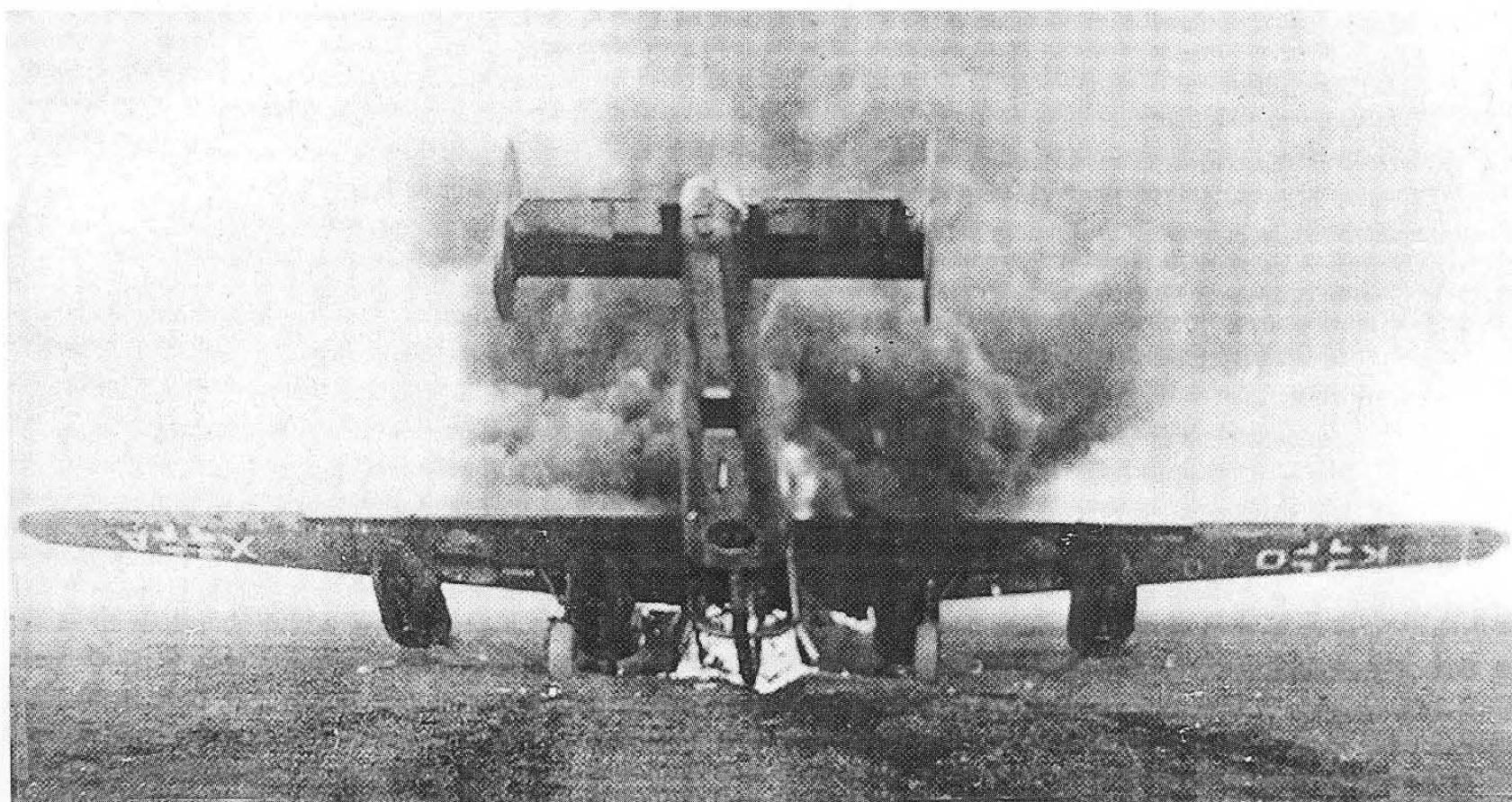
Hearing nothing further, however, Braun telephoned the department on 2 May and the next day, the flight was cancelled by a hand-written note from *Maj* Bellmann who recorded that Kesselring had cancelled the order. Two days later *Hptm* Braun was instructed to fly the Ju 290 to Königgrätz airfield (Hradec-Králové in Czechoslovakia) which remained in German hands. This he did, preparing the aircraft to be blown up, as *GFM* Schörner had given orders that all aircraft were to be destroyed so that they could not fall into Czech or Soviet hands although the capture of assorted Luftwaffe aircraft was probably of little interest to the Russians at this stage of the war.

At Königgrätz, Braun had to maintain a continuous guard on his Junkers but on 8 May, having received no further instructions, he decided to transport German women, children and wounded to spare them from Russian captivity. This was not a simple matter because a number of unattached ground troops tried to make claims to places aboard the aircraft, but Braun decided only to take women and children and some wounded from Königgrätz. He and his crew took arms and expelled the unwanted soldiers before he allowed it to be loaded, taking off at 12.55 hours on 8 May, aiming to reach München-Riem, already in American hands.

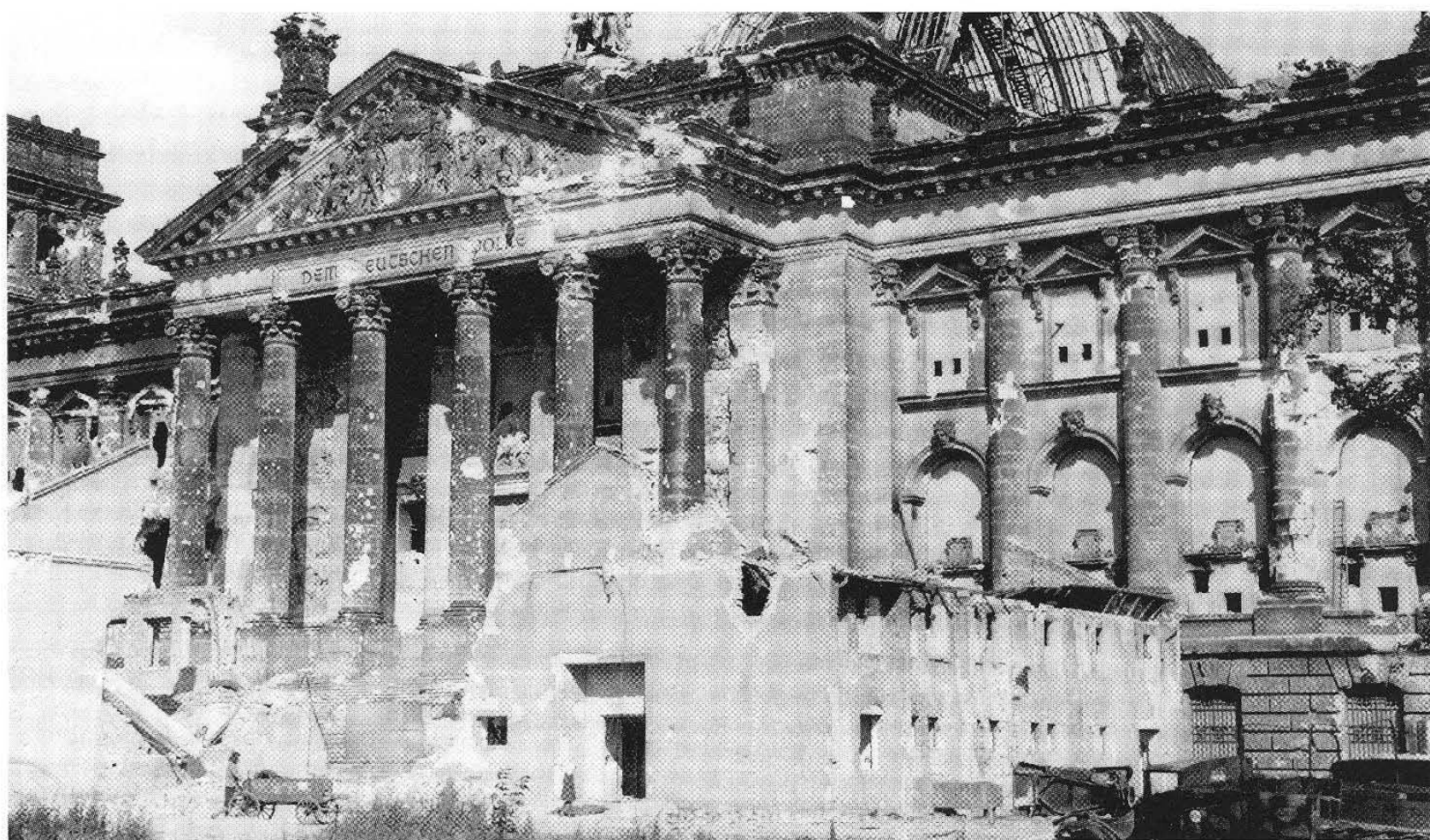
"On the Czech-German border, we were intercepted by two P-51 Mustangs in extremely bad weather while flying low. By rocking the wings and lowering the landing gear, we were able to avoid an attack and subsequently flew unhindered to München-Riem where we were able to land on a narrowly marked out runway free of bomb craters."

On arrival he surrendered the Ju 290 to the US forces there with about 70 passengers aboard; the soldiers painted the words 'Alles Kaputt' on the side of the aircraft's nose. It was later flown to the USA — its history included in almost every publication about the Junkers aircraft. Braun was not sent to a prison camp but test flew captured German aircraft for the USAAF and then went home where he continued in aviation until he retired as *Oberst* to live in Upper Bavaria.

194 Below: KO+XA dies near Quedlinburg, 13 April 1945







## THE TWILIGHT OF THE GODS

### Last operations

The following brief description of the fate of SS *Gen. Lt* Hermann Fegelein is included to show the extent of the chaos, confusion and duplicity which reigned in the heart of the Nazi empire during the last days of Hitler.

Hermann Fegelein must surely have known of his friend Heinrich Müller's plan for a carefully selected group of the 'Bunker Crew' to escape. He had apparently already decided that "I will not die in Berlin." On 25 April he left Berlin by car to visit his friend and protector *Obergruppenführer* Hans Jüttner, Chef der SS-Führungshauptamt (HQ), at Fürstenberg. In the event, return by car was no longer possible so Fegelein was flown back to Berlin and then 'disappeared' to visit his mistress while his wife, Gretl Braun, sister to Eva, Hitler's long-time companion, was safe in the south.

In secret, knowing of Hitler's mental and growing emotional instability, *Reichsführer-SS* Heinrich Himmler had made approaches to the Western Allies, through contact with Count Folke Bernadotte, Head of the Swedish Red Cross, for an armistice so that the Wehrmacht could concentrate its defence on the Ostfront. His intentions must have been clear to Fegelein but the plan came to nothing.

Hitler thought highly of Hermann Fegelein — as apparently also did Eva Braun. In February 1944 (perhaps at

the instigation of Himmler), he had suggested to the Führer that the Abwehr be handed over in its entirety to the *Reichsführer-SS*, so that all clandestine intelligence operations might be coordinated. Hitler accepted the proposal and authorised Himmler to put it into effect; this he did, making the briefing of KG 200 considerably simpler, although the SS often failed to realise and accommodate the air unit's practical difficulties.

The previous Abwehr organisation, efficient at operational level although poorly managed, was assimilated into a 'Military Section' VI of the RSHA under Walter Schellenberg following an agreement between Himmler and Keitel on 14 May 1944.

When Himmler's duplicity was revealed, rather surprisingly by a BBC nine-o'clock news broadcast, Hitler raged and ordered the arrest of the RF-SS. Fegelein, knowing nothing of the Führer's rage at Himmler's perfidy, was presumably awaiting a call to join those listed for the 'Special Flight to Barcelona'. On the 27th, Hitler demanded Fegelein's presence but he declined to appear. A group from the bunker bodyguard were sent to fetch him, when it became apparent that he was drunk. SS *Standartenführer* Högl was then sent to fetch him from an apartment in Charlottenburg, some 6.5 km away. On his return he was demoted and charged with desertion. The discovery of a quantity of jewellery (possibly belonging to Eva Braun) in his possession and, most damning of all, documents recovered from his office revealing Himmler's actions in connection with a proposed armi-

**195 Above:** The ruins of the Reich. This is the main entrance to the Reichstag in Berlin, photographed in summer 1945. A concrete bunker still remains in front and wrecked vehicles litter the road outside. It is of interest that some of the last defenders were not German but French; members of the SS 'Charlemagne' Division



stice led to a death sentence for 'treason'. When he asked his sister-in-law to intercede with Hitler, she refused. He was reported to have been handed over to 'Gestapo' Müller for interrogation and execution in the so-called 'Honour Court' of the Chancellery, and subsequently shot somewhere in or near the Chancellery shortly before midnight on 28 April 1945. Post-war, however, Heinrich Müller conspicuously failed to confirm the death of Fegelein.

Hitler amazed everyone in the bunker by announcing that he and Eva Braun were to be married but he delayed the brief ceremony until he had been assured that Fegelein's execution had been carried out, on the evening of 28 April. Later he called a meeting of the bunker group to discuss mass suicide by poisoning and Dr Stumpfegger handed out phials of potassium cyanide to each of those assembled. It became clear that most of the group were prepared to attempt escape, as had Fegelein.

So what happened to those included in the escape list? Certain, at last, that there was no hope of saving Berlin from the Soviet armies, Hitler and his new wife said their farewells on the afternoon of 30 April and, after a brief hysterical outburst from Frau Magda Goebbels, they entered Hitler's private apartment and the doors were closed. After 10 minutes, in accordance with the Führer's instructions, the doors were opened. In the midst of the absolute confusion of Russian shelling and gunfire and near-hysteria in the bunker, the two bodies were carried out of the Chancellery garden and, before a dozen of the Staff and officers, they were doused with petrol and set alight.

On 1 May, Goebbels and his wife also killed themselves after she had poisoned their six children. The bodies of Joseph and Magda Goebbels were also set alight in the Chancellery grounds. The 'Hitler-time' was over.

Of the 23 passengers listed by Müller only 11 days earlier, from which the Goebbels family had already been struck out and three additional men of the bodyguard included, only Bormann, Burgdorf, Hewel, Stumpfegger, Betz and Fraulein Manzialy remained to take a chance with the others.

A plan for a subterranean break-out from the Chancellery of all the defending troops and the Staff had already been prepared. A modified version of the plan was put forward by Gen Mohnke, for the 'Bunker Crew' to leave in three small groups by way of the Berlin underground railway system. The news of Hitler's death was to be kept from the troops until 22.00 hours on 1 May, an hour before the break-out was to begin, when all were to head for the north-western suburbs.

In the meantime, the bloody and unavailing defence of the Reichstag and Chancellery continued and the pilots of the III./KG 200 were called upon to make a final effort in support of the ground forces. From their base at Lübeck-Blankensee on the night of 30 April they flew to Berlin, not to attack the investing Red Army, but to drop containers of explosives and ammunition to the defences. Some 30 Fw 190s took part in the operation to deliver the materiel by small supply-drop parachutes but over

Wusterhausen/Dosse the Gruppenkommandeur, Maj Helmut Viedebannt, suffered disaster; the parachute released prematurely and became entangled in the tail-unit of his aircraft. He lost control and was killed in the ensuing crash. The rest of the Fw 190s returned to Lübeck. This, it seems, was the last major operation by KG 200.

On 30 April, four remaining Mistel units took off from Peenemünde to raid the bridges at Tantow, east of Prenzlau. One was lost almost immediately but the other three attacked without success — a last futile act of what may be described as resigned desperation!

The area from Berchtesgaden to the Swiss frontier was now a refuge for SS and NSDAP officers, their families and their spoils, and as a base for escape to Italy. Also in this area were kept 'Prominenten', Allied internees and captives of political importance, and foreign politicians sympathetic to the Nazi cause.

Bormann and Stumpfegger left with the third escape group on the night of 1/2 May. This party of 15 people, led by Werner Naumann, Secretary of State in Goebbels' Propaganda Ministry, included Baur who had been charged by Hitler with escorting Bormann, devotedly carrying Hitler's original will and testament to Dönitz. By 03.00 hours on 3 May they were above ground near the Lehrter Railway Station only a kilometre or so from their starting point; Baur became separated from Naumann, Bormann and Stumpfegger and, running for cover, was severely wounded. He and Naumann were later to become prisoners in Soviet hands. Bormann and Stumpfegger were reported as having been killed a little earlier but there is no evidence of their fate apart from the evidence of *Reichsjugendführer* Artur Axmann, leading the second escape group from the Bunker; he stated that he had seen Bormann and Stumpfegger, apparently dead, on the bridge over the railway line into the Lehrter Station.

Years later controversy still surrounds the deaths of Hitler and Bormann. There can be little doubt that Hitler died by his own hand; Bormann almost certainly died by suicide on a railway bridge. There are, however, just enough uncertainties to keep conspiracy theorists occupied for far longer than the Third Reich ever lasted — some 4,000 days.

Müller had departed from the Chancellery after the Fegelein affair and despite the fact that he was stated officially to have died in the last battles of Berlin and to be buried in the military cemetery at Kreuzberg, his death certificate indicating the time and place of death (the Müller grave does, in fact, exist) he like Gehlen, and with the Cold War looming, had ultimately found sanctuary deep within the American CIA.

A CIC report of 30 November 1948 stated, "Soviet efforts have been directed towards discovering the whereabouts of Hitler, Bormann and former SS-General Fegelein. The Soviet view that these leaders fled from Berlin in April/May 1945 and are being harbored in the West has been officially and strongly denied by careful coordination of all Western agencies concerned." The report continued, "Former SS-General Müller has proven



to be of genuine worth and his intelligence files of tremendous value."

Although none of the rest of the Bunker personnel had any part in the KG 200 story, it may be of interest to follow their subsequent movements. All were tied to Hitler by intense loyalty. *Gen der Infanterie* Wilhelm Burgdorf was the officer delegated to take poison to Rommel for his 'suicide' after the failed assassination attempt of June 1944. He was drunk throughout the last few days in the Bunker and while others were attempting escape, he shot himself before the Soviets moved in.

*Botschafter zbV* (Ambassador with Special Duties) Walter Hewel was Foreign Minister Ribbentrop's representative. He swore to end his life rather than be taken by the Red Army. He left the Bunker with an escape party led by Naumann and, faced with capture, shot himself.

*SS-Sturmabführer* Dr Ludwig Stumpfegger was temporarily Hitler's physician in April. He provided potassium cyanide capsules for Hitler and Eva, for the Goebbels family and for a number of others of the Bunker-crew. He also left with Naumann and simply went missing.

Georg Betz had organised Operation SERAGLIO and obviously knew which files had been flown to be lodged at Berchtesgaden; this made him indispensable for re-assembly of Government records. His fate is not known, nor is that of Constanze Manziarly, the vegetarian cook. Else Krüger escaped and survived.

*SS-Hauptsturmführer* Gross is a mystery — except that according to Heinrich Müller, Gross was the expert on South America and was only included on the list of potential escapees as he had been introduced by Müller. His name appears in no other contemporary documents.

If post-war interviews with Heinrich Müller are to be taken at face value, then Hitler, according to Müller, escaped from Berlin on 22 April on a flight to Barcelona organised by KG 200. The pilot was not Baur but his deputy, Betz. This claim, however, fails completely, when it is realised that the only German aircraft to arrive in

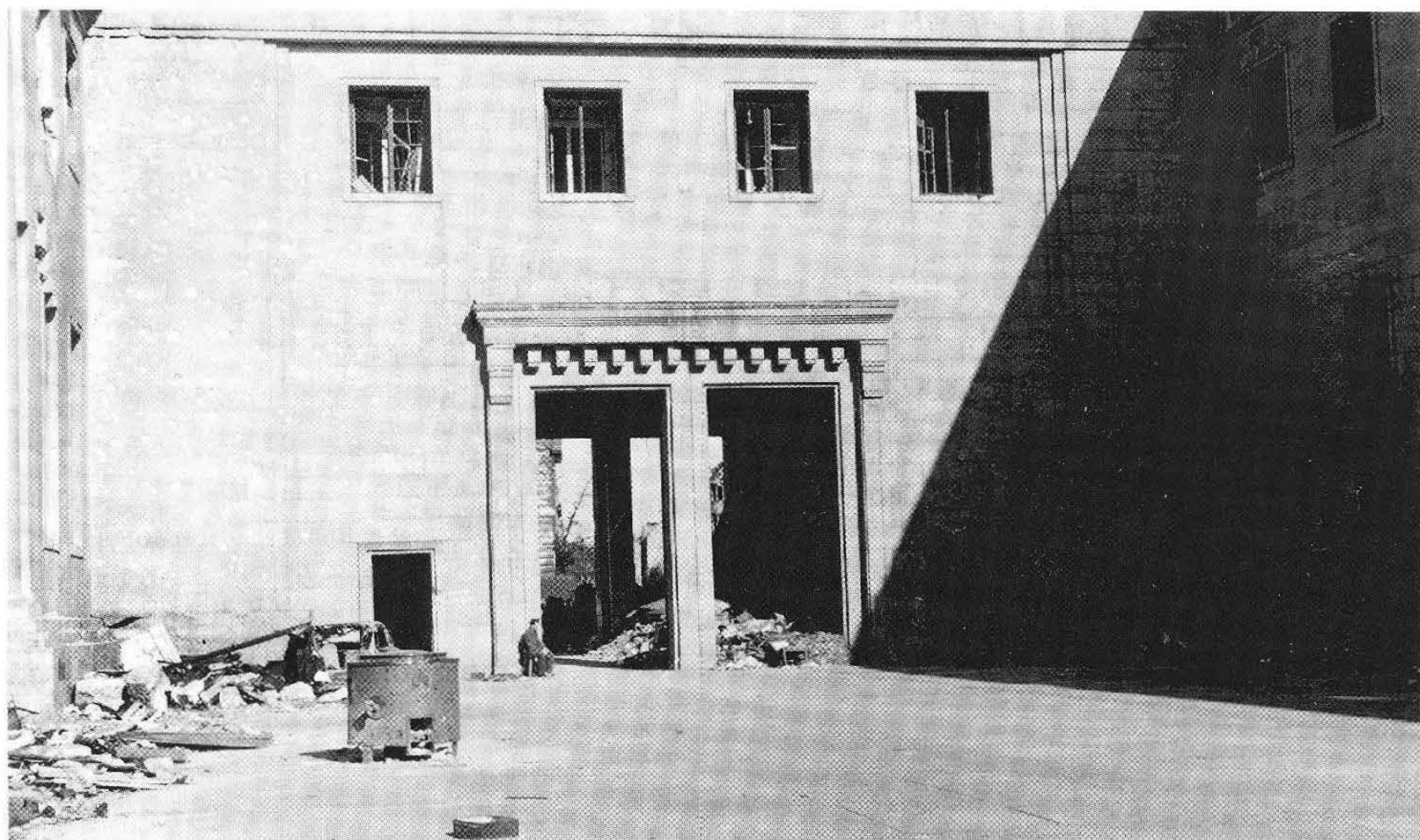
Spain in April 1945 was the Junkers Ju 290A-5, W.Nr. 110178, serving with Lufthansa as D-AITR, *Bayern*, which was damaged in a heavy landing at Barcelona on 6 April. It never returned to Germany, eventually being sold to the Spanish government on 29 April 1950. No other German aircraft landed in Spain at that time; such an event would surely have been noted by Allied forces who were watching for just such escape flights (see page 182). Other writers who claim that Ju 290A-6 (*sic*) W.Nr. 0185, landed in Spain are in error. 0185, KR+LP or A3+CB, was an A-9 and was destroyed on the Eastern Front on 23 May 1944. All other Ju 290 and 390 aircraft were either destroyed in action or captured by the Allies. None reached Spain.

According to other eye witnesses, notably Hanna Reitsch, Hitler was still in the bunker on 26 April when he promoted Robert von Greim to commander of the Luftwaffe. The best that can be said is that even if Hitler had left Berlin, which seems highly unlikely given his character and the mass of eye-witness accounts, he did not reach Spain by the method stated. It is, of course, quite possible that he may have discussed such plans with Müller, who, by his own admission, left the Chancellery very early on the morning of 29 April. His own escape flight began from the Tiergarten (as did that of Hanna Reitsch and Von Greim) late that evening. So why did Müller claim that Hitler had escaped? Could it be that both claims are correct? That Hitler did leave but found no suitable means of escape and was obliged to return or changed his mind and committed suicide, the day after Müller left the Chancellery? Was Müller himself misled? Was his recollection of events mistaken? — by his own admission even his memories of that time were confused. The conspiracy variations are endless but at the very end KG 200 was not part of them. Almost sixty years after the event all such theories are now entirely academic.

**196:** During the last days desperate attempts were made to supply the defenders of Berlin by air. These are the remains of a Junkers Ju 52/3m which has crashed in the Tiergarten.







## AFTER THE FALL

### Surrender

Since January 1945 *Lt* Wolfgang Wichmann of the 2. Staffel had been stationed with the crew of his He 111 at the airfield at Prague-Ruzyně, from where they had flown a long series of missions to Romania and Poland. On 7 May 1945 the airfield came under heavy mortar fire — the cessation of fighting agreed in the West did not apply on the Eastern Front. Wichmann was isolated; he had no contact with the Gruppenstab and troops of Andrei Vlasov's ROA, whose loyalty was questionable, had the airfield surrounded for defence. Several aircraft were destroyed or made unserviceable, but the *Leutnant* was fortunate, for his machine had been parked between two hangars and was protected from damage. At an early opportunity he and his crew took to the air to escape the chaos around Prague and headed for Königgratz. During interrogation they said they had considered the long flight to Spain but decided to fly to western Germany. On the airfield were parked two other aircraft belonging to the I./KG 200, but they were unable to find out who had flown the other aircraft, one usually piloted by the team *Lt* Rederer/*Ofw* Lange, to Königgratz. The *Leutnant* advised a group of signal corps girls to travel west as soon as they could, rather than fall into Soviet hands. At this time he believed he saw vehicles laden with Russian infantry in the distance and he took off with two Luftwaffenhilferin aboard, girls whose job was packing parachutes and who had arrived at Königgratz with a band of refugees.

At very low level they flew westwards and, while passing over the Bohmeswald, they threw out their machine-

guns and got together pieces of white cloth to indicate surrender to any fighter pilots they might encounter. Wichmann landed the Heinkel in a field near Soltau on the Luneburger Heath — there he and his crew said goodbye and each made off. Only a few minutes after his landing three Spitfires appeared and circled the field but took no action.

After a mission had been cancelled on 19 April, *Lt* Rederer and *Ofw* Lange were ordered to join the 'Sonderstaffel Baumbach' at Grossenbrode and, from there, fly to Flensburg-Weiche. On the morning of 7 May, on leaving his quarters, Lange discovered that their aircraft A3+HC was missing, having been stolen during the night; this was the He 111 that was flown to Königgratz. Who took the aircraft? That remains still a mystery.

For Rederer and the others the war was over. A few days later Staffelfkapitän *Hptm* Noderer and remaining members of the unit arrived at Flensburg. Some of them went to the home of *Hptm* Hamsgen, disengaging themselves from the Gruppenstab of the I./KG 200.

A great number of serviceable aircraft were still at Lista in Norway, as the provisional armistice with the British in northern Germany had not included forces in the 'Protectorate'. Members of the II. Gruppe stationed at Tirstrup were ordered on 5 May to Lista and *Oblt*

**197 Above:** Summer 1945. The still impressive entrance to the Reich Chancellery, now no more than a backdrop for curious Allied soldiers of the occupying forces. The entire building has now been demolished



Friedrich Droste was ordered to fly the only serviceable Ju 88 to Norway. Three days later, the day of the 'official' German capitulation, a General arrived at the airfield and ordered all aircraft immediately to Kurland to assist in the evacuation of as many German soldiers and civilians as possible to western Germany or to Sweden, to escape being taken by the Soviets. Droste in his Ju 88 was ordered to lead the flight as pathfinder on 9 May.

Over the Skagerrak he flew over British naval vessels and immediately four fighters took off from an accompanying aircraft carrier (probably HMS *Searcher* or *Trumpeter*) and attacked the Junkers. The starboard engine was damaged and the radio put out of action, while a crew member was injured. The Staffelpkapitän aborted his flight and returned to Tirstrup on one engine.

### The 'Diplomatic' flights

During the last frenzied days of April 1945, Speer and Baumbach acted as a magnet for many of the senior figures trying to broker a last-ditch peace with the Western Allies before much of Germany was overrun by the Russians. Among them was Karl Frank, one-time 'Protector' of Bohemia-Moravia who suggested the use of Czech industrialists to negotiate on behalf of the Germans. On 23 April he demanded that Baumbach supply an aircraft suitable for a flight to Paris for this purpose. This turned out to be a Siebel 204D. The delegation duly departed but not for Paris — instead Speer ordered a diversion to Neubiberg near Munich where he hoped to enlist the aid of *GFM* Kesselring. Kesselring, however, had his own agenda and turned the delegation away. By the 27th it was apparent that this attempt at negotiation had failed.

Frank tried twice more; first sending an envoy with a letter to a Papal nuncio in the Tyrol in the hope of enlisting the Vatican's help and then a representative of the International Red Cross who flew from Prague to Zurich. The approach was rejected yet again — nothing else but unconditional surrender would suffice — and Frank was hanged by the Czechs in 1946.

It appears that in every case the same Si 204 aircraft was used, although it was subject to frequent marking changes. Dr Gellermann recorded it as D-SNAY, whereas Swiss authorities recorded it at Zurich as D-OWHA. Czech witnesses noted that in early May while at Prague-Ruzyně it changed markings every day.

The IV./KG 200 under command of *Maj* Kuschke were stationed at Vejle, Denmark, where on 1 May he was ordered by *Gross Adm* Dönitz, via Baumbach and *Gen der Luftwaffe* Holle, to move all his Ju 88s and a Siebel 204 to Flensburg. The move took place on 3 May under *Hptm* Sturm. This aircraft and three Ju 88s were sent to Grossenbrode, but no further orders were issued. It was proposed by Speer to deliver Nazi members and ministers into British hands in London — an odd choice when Montgomery's headquarters was much nearer — and Sturm was ordered to obliterate the swastika and to apply a marking of black-white-red, the traditional colours of Germany.

The formation of a 'Sonderstaffel' or 'Sonderkommando' Baumbach was followed by a move of almost all the aircraft of the IV. Gruppe as well as remaining 2. and 3. Staffeln machines to airfields in Schleswig-Holstein to await special tasks for the Dönitz 'Government', by which Baumbach was officially appointed *Chef der Regierungsstaffel* (Government Flight) on 3 May — this became the official name of the Sonderstaffel. One aircraft, flown by *Hptm* Eichholz, brought Karl Frank from Prague for discussions with Dönitz. Also *Reichskommissar* Seyss-Inquart was collected from the Netherlands for talks, but no further orders came from Dönitz for his Sonderstaffel.

Throughout April the fighting in the Balkans and in Northern Italy had not abated and the British and Canadian Armies in the north of the Western Front came ever closer to the Red Army's advance. US forces in Southern Germany also came closer to the Soviet forces and the embryo Czech Army in Austria.

The only purpose for operations by Kommando Olga (*Staffelkapitän*: *Hptm* Peter Stahl) by this time was the provision of sabotage equipment to groups on the ground. For instance, the 2nd Tactical Air Force Intelligence Monthly Survey for March 1945 identified one of two B-17s or Ju 88s flying on eleven nights to Rotterdam, Quakenbrück and Cochem to Handorf, and Hildesheim to Echterdingen, a flight by a black-camouflaged B-17 recorded on the night of 23-25 March.

*Oberst* Baumbach had a varied collection of transport and communications aircraft, now sadly lacking the three B-17s that partly equipped the I./KG 200 in February at Hildesheim for service with Olga, operating from Echterdingen, before moving base to Muhldorf-Inn. Their operations officially ended when the II. and IV. Gruppen were disbanded on 22 April, followed by the disbandment of the Stab/KG 200 on the 25th.

Even with the Third Reich in its death throes, in early May, *Lt* Ludwig Stumptner of Olga received a surreal order to deliver meteorological equipment onto a glacier on the Grossglockner. Instead, he and his crew, accompanied by a female Luftwaffe auxiliary decided to make good their escape. In an He 111H-6 devoid of all unit markings they flew at a low-level from Aigen to Kleinmeinfeld in Bavaria where he safely belly-landed, the aircraft's occupants then falling into American hands.

The comings and goings at the Berlin Chancellery had no direct concern for the Stab or the Kommandos of KG 200 but, partly through his involvement in Speer's amateurish plots and growing acquaintance with the Nazi hierarchy, Werner Baumbach had greater authority to carry out his primary task, namely the gathering together of transport aircraft for whatever purposes his superiors might decide. A large-scale move by land by troops and civilians from the 'Protectorate' of Czechoslovakia was largely a matter of overcoming the disruption of the road and rail network but evacuation of the Baltic enclaves was by sea (a vulnerable operation) or by air. So the concentration of aircraft on the Baltic coast by Baumbach could have had a dual purpose.



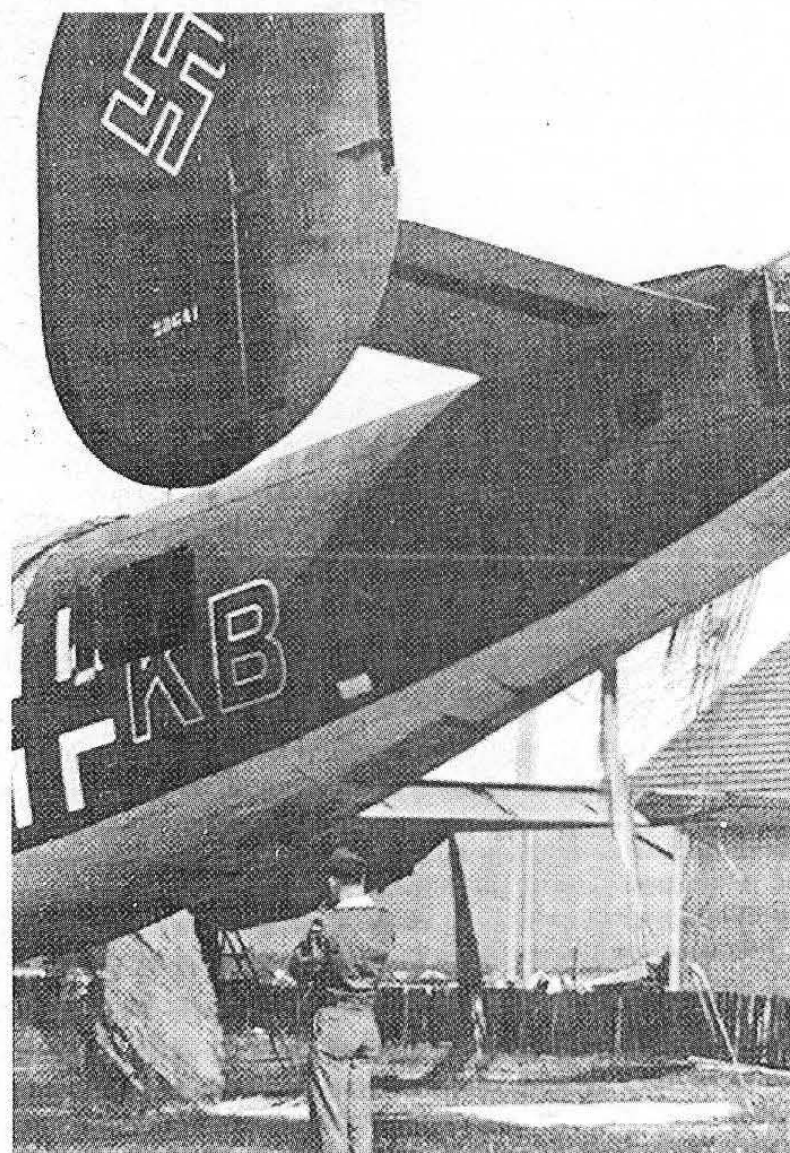
By 2 May, British forces had driven across Schleswig-Holstein to the Baltic coast, intending to pre-empt any Soviet advance into that area. Dönitz attempted to arrange a local surrender to the British so that he could continue resisting the Red Army "to save as many German soldiers as possible from Bolshevism and enslavement." He set up a command post at Murwick near Flensburg on 2 May, making his headquarters aboard the ship *Patria* in the harbour there. He decided on a 'local surrender' (in effect an armistice) with Gen Bernard Montgomery and instructed the commander at Rugen to arrange evacuation from Kurland and East Prussia.

On 5 May Dönitz, to show 'good faith' forbade all further 'Werewolf' action in the West. Gen Jodl flew to München-Riem next day as emissary to Eisenhower. He was told that fighting would continue "on all fronts" until Germany surrendered unconditionally. At 02.30 hours on 7 May Jodl signed a declaration of unconditional surrender, yet to be ratified, with effect from midnight, 8 May 1945. Some five million troops and refugees were saved from the Russians in the eight days that Dönitz prolonged the fighting, an amazing achievement in the face of Soviet attacks. On 23 May his 'Provisional German Government' was dissolved by the Allies.

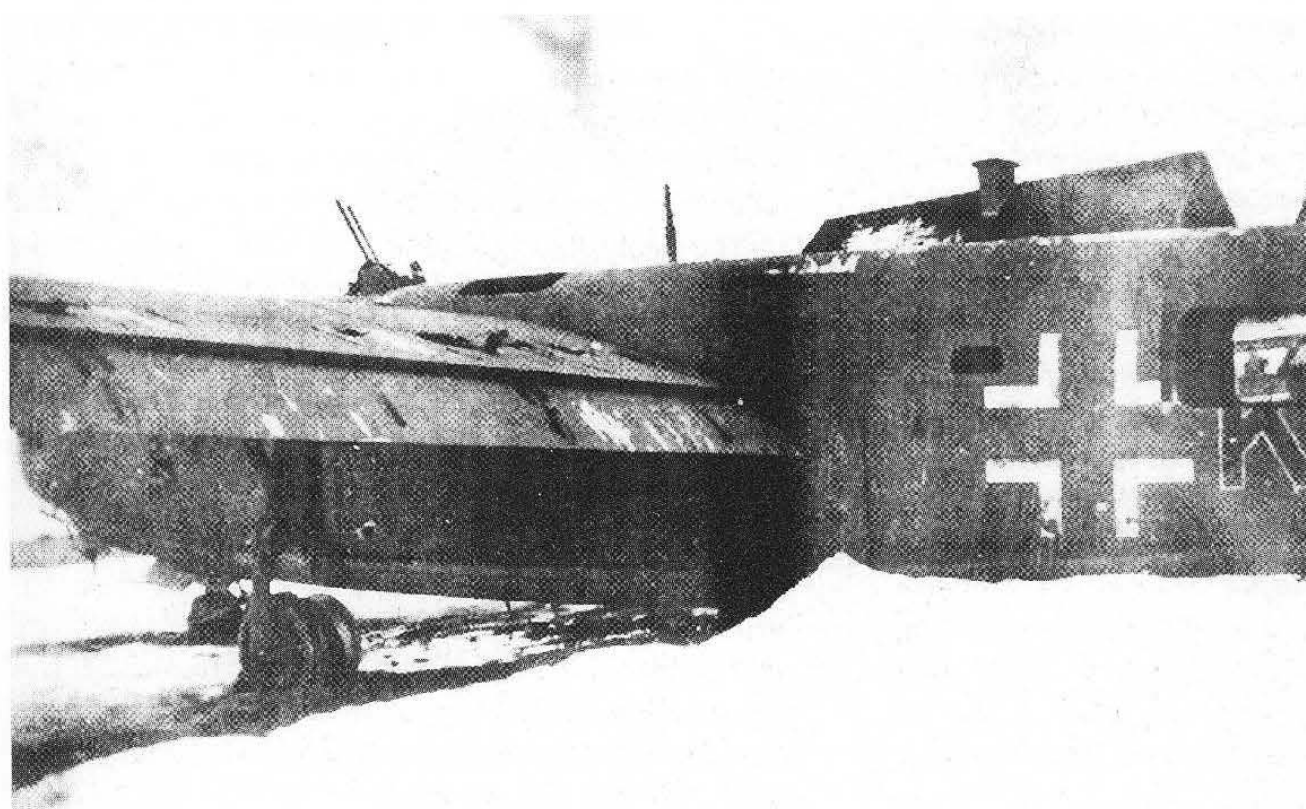
Of others who took part in the KG 200 story, most simply surrendered. Gehlen and his staff of Fremde Heer Ost took their files to the Americans. For many years afterwards Gehlen supplied NATO with 70 per cent of its intelligence.

Those personnel identified as being from KG 200 were rounded up and placed in a special camp for interrogation by RAF Intelligence, where they stayed for the rest of 1945. On 21 December 1945 all officers of KG 200 were officially made available for discharge by the controlling RAF authorities. An indication of the suspicion in which ex-members of KG 200 were held by the Occupation Forces is the fact that all personnel of the unit were still held in a camp at Gettorf in February 1946. Despite the straitened circumstances in which the men of KG 200 found themselves, they soon proved they had lost none of their initia-

tive or ability as scroungers. In a snap inspection on 4 February by an RAF Intelligence officer, it was found that not only did each man have enough food to last him at least a month, there was highly efficient heating and every room had a telephone. In addition, a dozen women served in a special capacity in four rooms set aside for the purpose... The camp was also home to a thriving toymaking industry which employed destitute ex-Luftwaffe members. An inspection by the RAF Provost department only two weeks earlier had revealed none of these activities; the camp was closed that same day and its inmates dispersed.



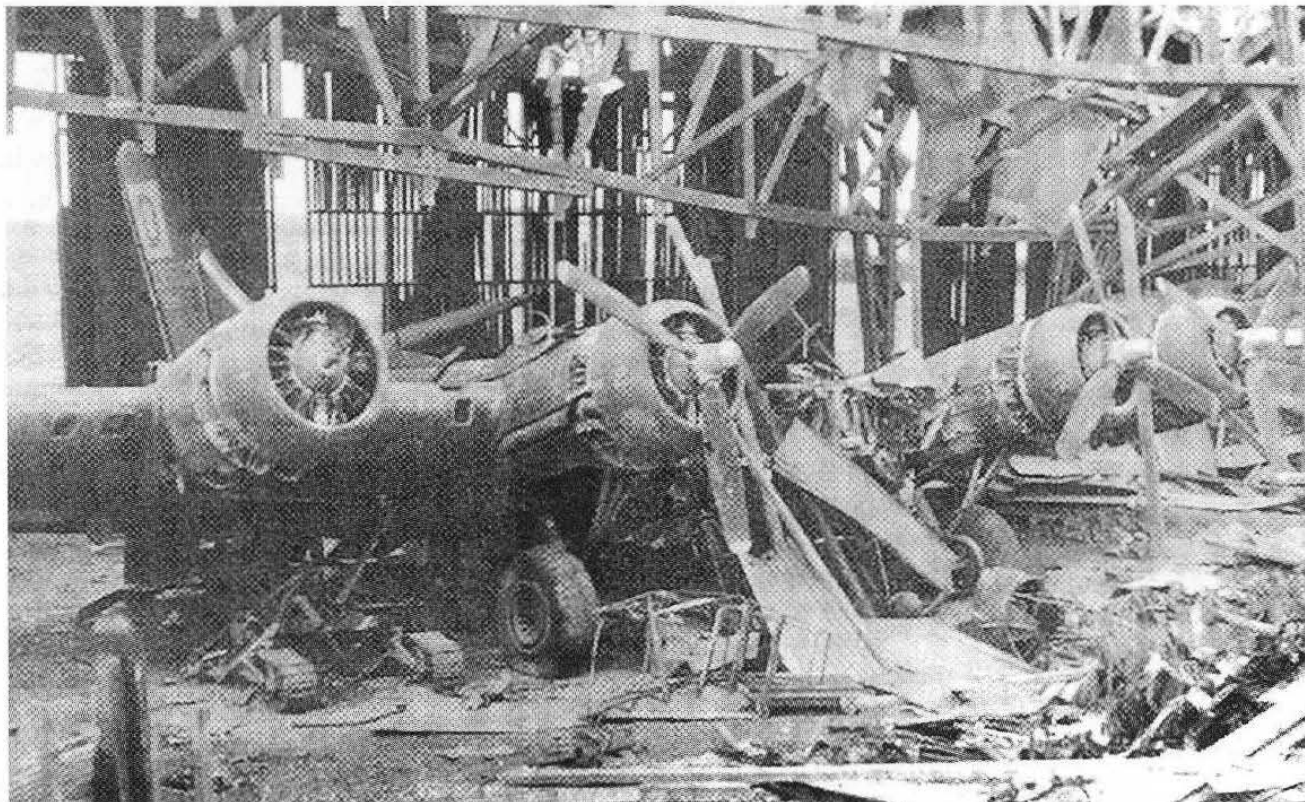
**198 Above:** B-24H-5-DT 41-28641, once A3+KB of 1/ KG 200, was found damaged and abandoned at Salzburg-Muhldorf in April 1945. Apart from patches of another colour (dark green 71?) to cover the original American markings, it appears to retain its original finish. The German markings and unit identity code are all in accordance with late-war regulations



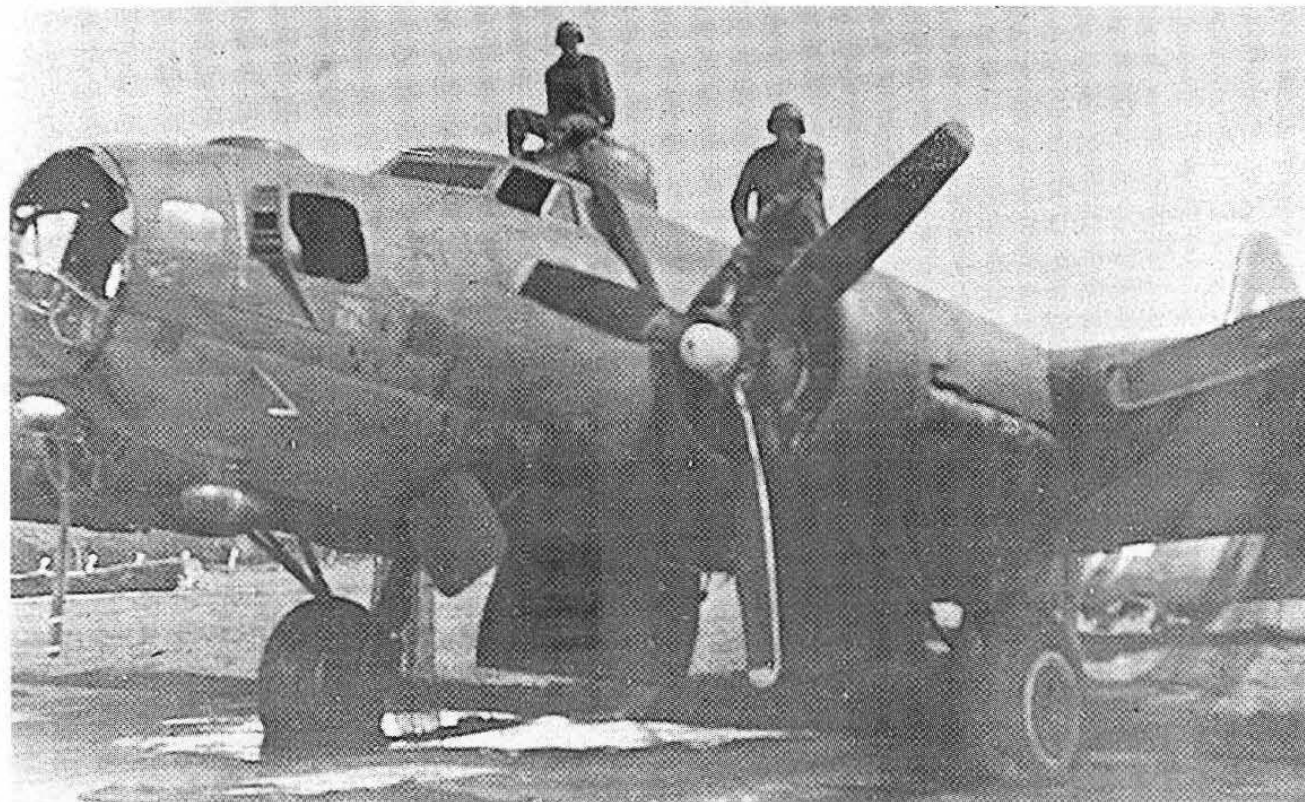
**199 Left:** It appears that A3+KB was left abandoned for some considerable time, either from early 1945 or until the winter of that year. This one of the few pictures of a KG 200 aircraft where the full unit code can be seen



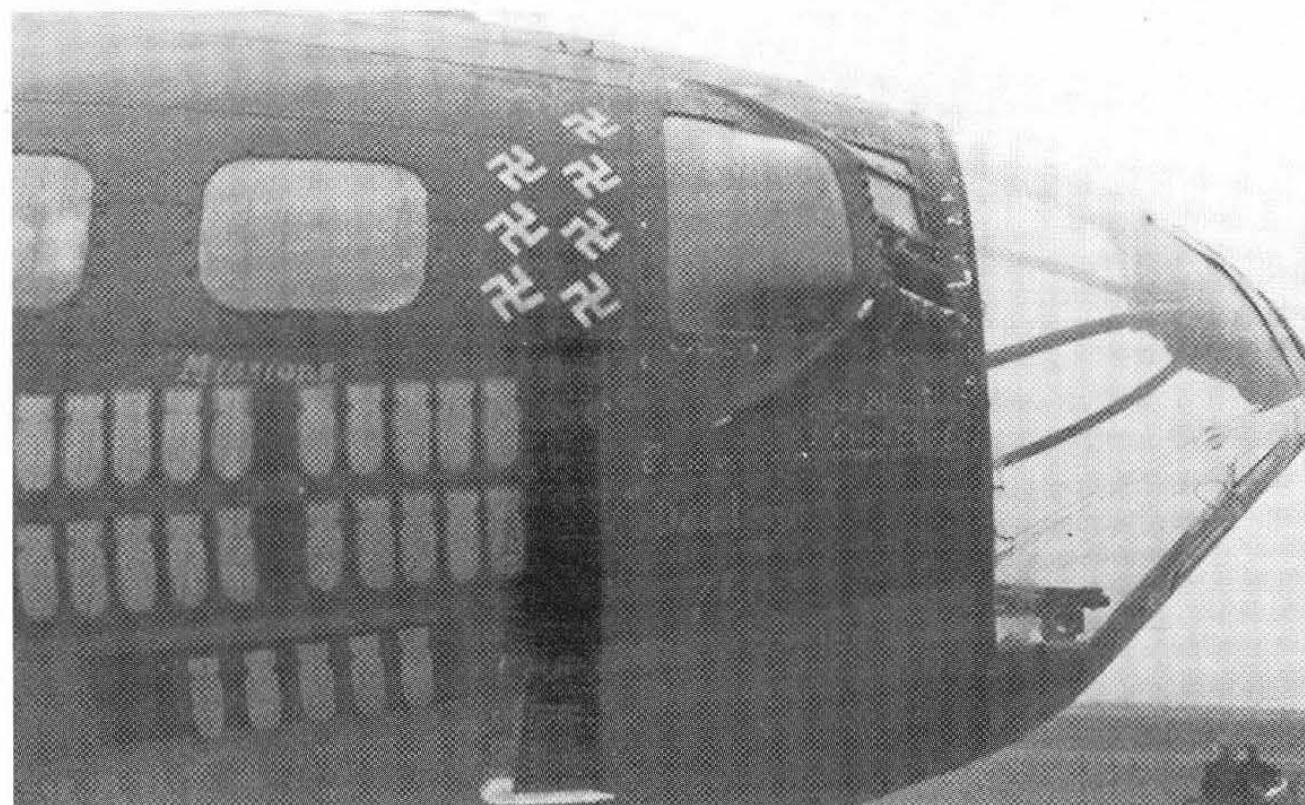
**200:** Found as seen in a wrecked hangar at Orly, near Paris, France, this B-17F-110-BO was once 42-30604 of the 100th Bomb Group, named *Badger Beauty V*. Lost on 4 October 1943, it was damaged by the French resistance so may never have been flown or used by the Luftwaffe but may have been intended for spares. In the event it was recovered, by then fitted with three new propellers, and now forms part of the Boeing Museum collection



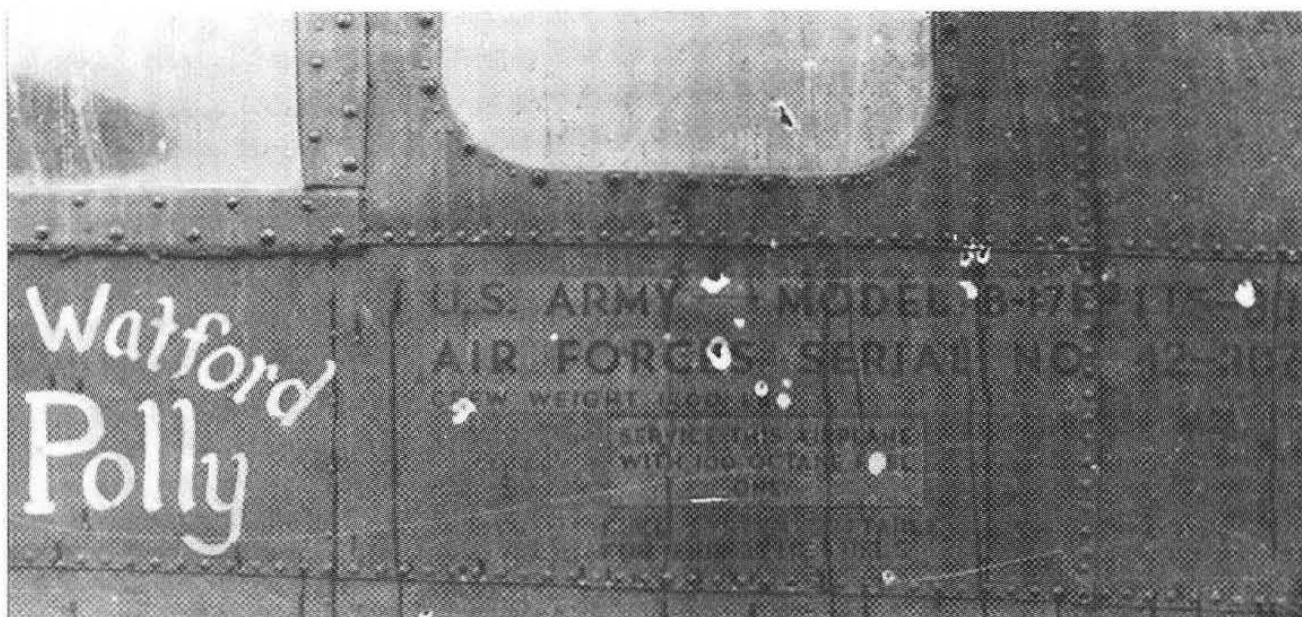
**201:** American GIs pose on B-17F 42-30713, *Phyllis Marie*, after she had been discovered at Altenburg, south of Leipzig, at the war's end. Apart from the addition of German insignia and the removal of armament she looked much the same as she did when she was lost on 6 March 1944 with 2nd Lt Max Quakenbush and his crew from the 390th Bomb Group. Allocated to KG 200 she had been allotted the *Verbandskennzeichen* A3+EK



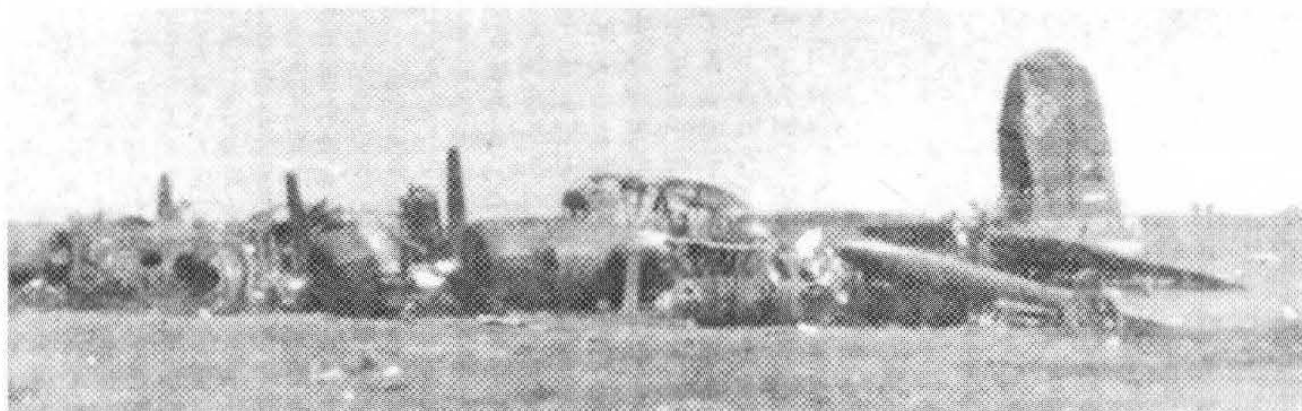
**202:** A close up of the nose of *Phyllis Marie* after her recapture. Throughout her time with KG 200 she had retained a variety of American-applied artwork. It is apparent that the clear plastic nose cone is still intact in this picture



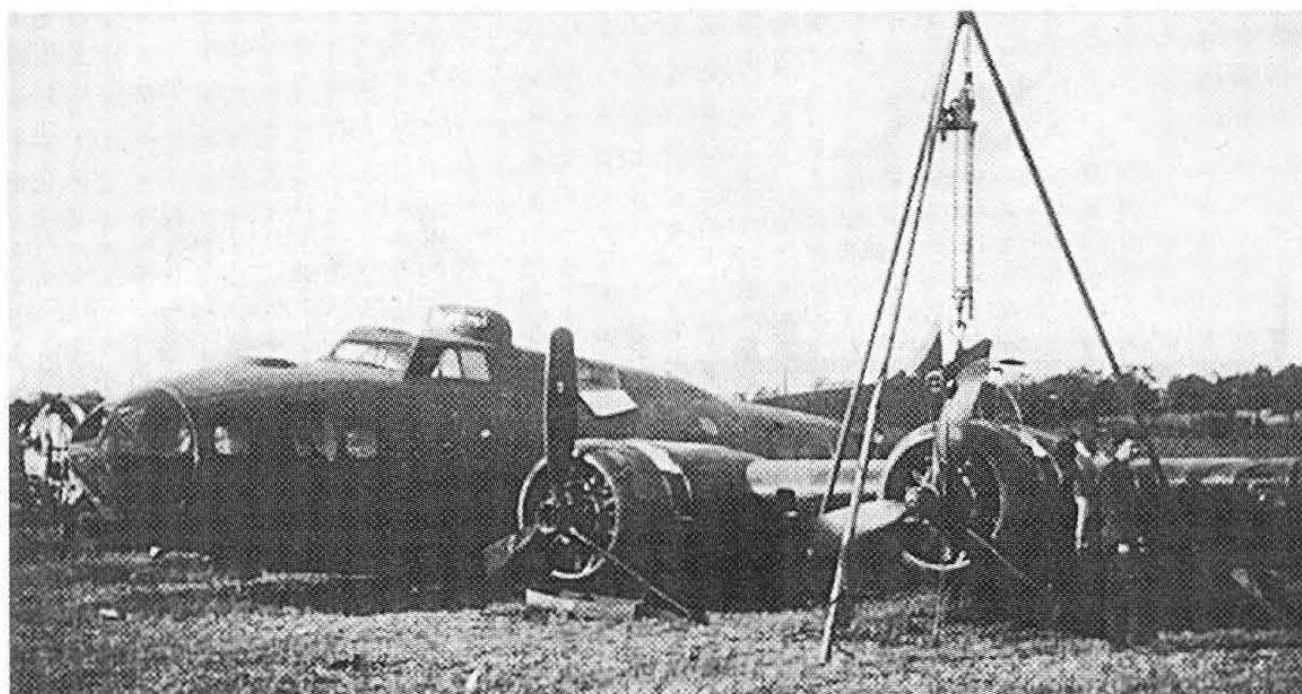




**203:** Incontrovertible proof of the identity of Phyllis Marie—42-30713. 'Watford Polly' is believed to be name of a female friend of one of the crew who turned out not to be quite what she seemed...



**204:** Only a few B-17Gs served with the Luftwaffe. This one is 43-37827, Wally's Wheels, of the 305th Bomb Group. Lost on 5 December 1944, the aircraft was apparently not much damaged and was presumably quickly passed on to KG 200. This is the state it was in when found at Weimar/Kolleda in May 1945



**205:** Seen during recovery operations in July-August 1943, this is B-17F 42-30146, Down & Go, of the 94th Bomb Group. Subsequently the aircraft served with I./KG 200 (probably as A3+CE) with whom it came to an unfortunate end on 10 March 1945 when it blew up on takeoff, killing almost all on board. Most of the passengers were members of the Vichy French Government trying to make an escape



**206:** The work of the 2./Versuchsverband Ob.d.L is not really part of the KG 200 story, being primarily concerned with the testing of Allied aircraft, mostly fighters, in relation to development of counter-measures by the Luftwaffe. This picture proves conclusively, however, that the Lightning, 44-23725, which was flown to Axis lines by the defector Martin Monti, was an F-5E reconnaissance model



# ORDERS OF BATTLE

## Versuchsverband Ob.d.L. & KG 200

**10 MARCH 1944**

### VERSUCHSVERBAND Ob.d.L.

	TYPE	ON STRENGTH	SERVICEABLE
1. Staffel	Ju 88	9	7
	Ju 86	4	4
	Ar 240	1	1
	Bf 109	2	1
	Ju 188	2	0
2. Staffel	Mosquito	1	0
	P-47	2	0
	Lightning	1	0
	Spitfire	1	0
	Mustang	2	0
	Griffin?	1	1
	(Griffon-engined Spitfire?)		

### KG 200

#### Geschwader Stab

Communications types 3 2

1. Staffel	Ju 352	1	1
	Ju 252	2	1
	Dakota	1	0
	S.M. 75	1	1
	LeO 246	4	1
	B-17	2	1

2. Staffel	He 111H	15	11
	Ju 188F-1	1	1
	Do 217E-4	1	0

#### 3. (Erg) Staffel

Ar 1962	0	
He 59	2	2
Bloch	2	0
Bf 108	2	1
Amiot	2	1
LeO 451	2	1
Gliders	13	8
DFS 230	1	1

II Gruppe — forming

**30 APRIL 1944**

### VERSUCHSVERBAND Ob.d.L.

	TYPE	ON STRENGTH	SERVICEABLE
1. Staffel	Ju 88	7	2
	Ar 240	1	0
	Ju 86	3	2
	Bf 109	3	2
	FW 58	1	1
	Fh 104	1	0
2. Staffel	Mosquito VI	1	0
	P-47	2	1
	Lightning	2	0
	Spitfire	2	0
	Mustang	2	0

### KG 200

#### Geschwader Stab

Communications types 3 1

1. Staffel	Ju 252	2	1
	Ju 352	1	0
	Bloch 160/162	2	0

2. Staffel	Ju 188F-1	1	0
	He 111H-3/5	2	1
	He 111H-6/20	13	8
	He 115	2	2
	He 59	2	2
	Do 217	1	1
	Fw 189	1	1

#### 3. (Erg) Staffel

Amiot	3	1
LeO 451	1	1
LeO 246	3	1
Ar 196	2	2
B-17F/G	8	2
B-71 (SB-2)	1	1
C-47	1	0
Ju 87	1	1
Si 204	1	0
CAMS 161	1	0
Gliders	11	11
DFS 230	1	1



### 30 APRIL 1944

TYPE	ON STRENGTH	SERVICEABLE
II. Gruppe (2.Staffel)		
Ar 196	3	1
Hs 126	1	1
Fw 44	2	2
Bf 108	2	2
B 131	4	4
Kl 35	4	4

### 10 NOVEMBER 1944

1. As part of the re-organisation of KG 200, III./KG 66 (Mistel) will be placed under the command of KG 200 and renamed II./KG 200.
2. Erprobungs-und-Lehrkommando 36 (at Graz) will be renamed Versuchskommando/KG 200.
3. At the same time the present II./KG 200 will be renamed IV./KG 200 and will take over the duties of a training and replacement Gruppe, including training of 'Reichenbach' (*sic*) and all other suicide equipment.
4. In addition, the possibility of renaming I./SG 5 as III./KG 200 is envisaged, the Sonderverband 'Einhorn' being simultaneously incorporated into this unit.
5. Versuchsverband Ob.d.L. will be renamed Versuchsverband OKL."

### VERSUCHSVERBAND OKL

	TYPE	ON STRENGTH	SERVICEABLE
Stab	B 181	1	1
1. Staffel			
	Ju 88	2	2
	Ju 88T-1	2	2
	Ar 234	6	4
	Me 262	5	3
2. Staffel			
	Mosquito	1	0
	P-47	2	1
	Lightning	2	1
	Spitfire	2	0
	Mustang	2	2
	Harvard	1	1
	Typhoon	1	0
3. Staffel			
	Ju 88	4	0
	Ju 388	3	0
	Ar 234	3	0
	Me 410	1	0

### 10 NOVEMBER 1944

#### KG 200

	TYPE	ON STRENGTH	SERVICEABLE
Geschwader Stab			
Communications types		2	2
1. Staffel			
	Ju 290A-4/7	3	2
	Ju 352A-1	1	1
2. Staffel			
	He 111H-6/20	8	8
	Ju 188	8	4
	He 115	2	2
	Fw 189	1	0
	Do 24	4	4
3. (Erg) Staffel			
	B-24	1	0
	B-17	5	2
	Fw 58	1	1
	Si 204	1	1
	Gliders	0	0
II. Gruppe (ex III./KG 66 - Luftwaffenkommando West)			
	Mistel	18	6
	Ju 88	11	10
	Ju 88	2	1
	Ju 188	4	0
	Bf 109	11	5
	Fw 190	3	2
III. Gruppe (ex I./SG 5)			
	No aircraft		
IV. Gruppe			
	Ju 52/3m	1	1
	Hs 126	1	1
	Bf 108	3	3
	FW 56	6	6
	Si 204	3	3
	He 111	2	2
	Fw 44	7	7
	DFS 230	7	7
	Ar 96	9	9
	FW 190	23	23
	Kl 35	4	4
	Ju W 34	1	1
	B 181	12	12
	Ju 87	1	1
	B 131	5	5
	Go 242	2	2



### 31 DECEMBER 1944

#### VERSUCHSVERBAND OKL

	TYPE	ON STRENGTH	SERVICEABLE
Stab	B 181	1	1
1. Staffel	Ju 88	1	0
	Ju 88T	1	0
	Ar 234	7	5
	Me 262	6	4
2. Staffel	Mosquito	1	0
	P-47	2	1
	Lightning	2	1
	Spitfire	3	1
	Mustang	3	1
	Harvard	1	1
	Tempest	1	0
3. Staffel	Ju 88	3	0
	Ju 388	3	0
	Ar 234	4	1
	Me 410	1	0

#### KG 200

##### Geschwader Stab

Communications types 2 2

1. Staffel	Ju 290A-4/7	3	3
	Ju 352A-1	1	1
	Fw 58	1	1
	B-24	1	1
	B-17	5	2
2. Staffel	He 111H	8	8
3. Staffel	He 115	3	2
	Do 24	4	2
4. Staffel	He 111H-6	2	1
	Ju 188	9	4
	Fw 189	1	1
	Si 204	1	0

##### II. Gruppe (ex III./KG 66)

##### Gruppe Stab

	Ju 88S-3	1	1
	Ju 88A-4	2	1
	Ju 352	1	1
	Fw 190	1	0
5. Staffel	Ju 88S-3	8	8
	Ju 188A-2	4	2
	Ju 188E-1/3	4	0

### 31 DECEMBER 1944

	TYPE	ON STRENGTH	SERVICEABLE
6. Staffel	Mistel 1	19	12
	Mistel 3	11	3 (Trainers)
	Bf 109F-4	2	0
	Fw 190F-8	1	0

7. Staffel	Mistel 1	3	2 (Trainers)
	Mistel 2	1	1
	Ju 88A-4	1	1
	Bf 109F-4	6	6
	Fw 190A-8	1	0

##### III. Gruppe (ex I./SG 5)

No aircraft

##### IV. Gruppe

##### Gruppe Stab

FW 190 6 5

13. Staffel	Fw 190	21	10
	Fw 44	1	1

##### 14., 15., 16. Staffeln

	He 111	1	1
	Ju 87	1	1
	Si 204	3	2
	Bf 108	3	2
	Ju W 34	1	1
	Hs 126	1	1
	Ju 52/3m	1	1
	KI 35	4	4
	FW 44	7	7
	B 131	5	5
	B 181	12	12
	Fw 56	6	6
	Ar 96	9	8
	He 111Z	4	0

##### Versuchskommando

	He 177A-3/5	1	1
	Ju 88A-4	1	1
	Do 217	3	0
	He 111H	11	

### 10 January 1945

#### KG 200

TYPE	ON STRENGTH	SERVICEABLE
Various	295	206

##### 9., 10., 11 Staffeln

	Fw 190	41	34
	Fw 190 trainer		
		12	12

13 Staffel	Fw 190	21	15 7
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## SUMMARY

During the final three months of the war in Europe, the administration of the Geschwader became increasingly complex and, to some degree, confused. Additional units were incorporated, or integrated one with another. Here is a summary of the final organisation of the Geschwader :

Unit formed 20 February 1944 and disbanded 25 April 1945:

Stab/KG 200

Base: HQ at Berlin-Gatow

Aircraft types: Fw 200 and Ju 188

I./KG 200 composed of four Staffeln; duties were agent drops and then also included bomber operations.

Base: HQ at Finow

1./KG 200: handled the long-distance operations.

Base: Finow

Aircraft types: Fw 200, Ju 290, Ju 390, Ju 52, Ju 252, Ju 352, Ar 232, He 177, B-17, B-24

2./KG 200: short and medium-range operations.

HQ at Finow was divided into four 'outstations': 'CARMEN' in Northern Italy covered the western and southern Mediterranean, North and West Africa; 'CLARA' and 'TOSKA' handled the Eastern Front and south-east; 'OLGA' (Frankfurt) handled Western Europe.

Aircraft types: Ju 52, Ju 88, Ju-188, Do 217, He 177, B-17, B-24

3./KG 200: transport with flying boats and some training duties.

Base: Baltic island of Bug-am-Rügen (later at Flensburg)

Aircraft types: Ar 196, BV 138, Do 18, Do 24, He 115

4./KG 200: training and technical matters.

Base: Finow

Aircraft types: Ar 96, Bf 108, Bü 181 and a few other training types

II./KG 200 composed of three Staffeln: provided pathfinders, radar-jamming aircraft, bombers, Mistels and Mistel training.

Base: HQ at Burg

5./KG 200: pathfinder, bomber and radar-jamming unit.

Base: Burg

Aircraft types: Ju 88S, Ju 188A & E

6./KG 200: the operational Mistel unit.

Base: Rechlin

Aircraft types: Mistel 1 (Bf 109F & Ju 88A), Mistel 2 (Fw 190A-6 & Ju 88G-1) and Mistel 3 (Fw 190A-8 & Ju 88G-10 or H-4)

7./KG 200: Mistel training.

Base: Rechlin

Aircraft types: Mistel S1 (Bf 109F and Ju 88A4), Mistel S2 (Fw 190A-8 & Ju 88G-1) and Mistel 3 (Fw 190A-6 and Ju-88A-6)

III./KG 200: experimental unit responsible for fitting Fw 190 fighters with torpedoes.

Base: Berlin-Staaken

Aircraft type: Fw 190F-8

IV./KG 200: handled the Fi 103 *Reichenberg*.

Base: Prenzlau

Aircraft types: Fi 103R-1, R-2, R-3 and R-4, He 111, He 111 (Zwilling), Go 242 and DFS 230

### A selection of known operations by KG 200

All carried out on the Eastern Front by Lothar Sieber and crew in an He 111 coded 'A3+EC'.

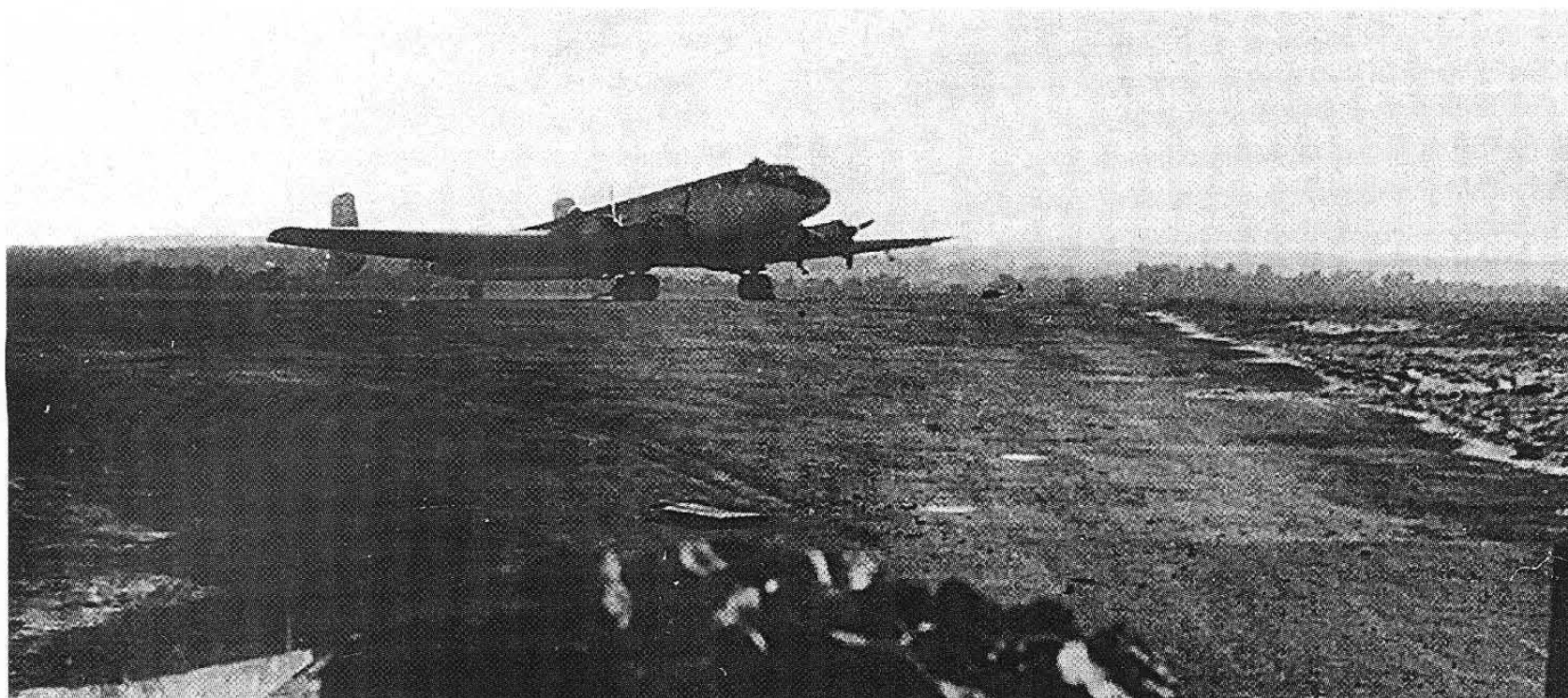
<i>Heidelbeere</i>	Bilberry	26/7/44
<i>Melone</i>	Melon	27/8/44
<i>Reiher</i>	Heron	28/8/44
<i>Maulbeere</i>	Mulberry	29/8/44
<i>Tollkirsche</i>	Deadly Nightshade	31/8/44
<i>Herbstlaub</i>	Autumn Leaves	7/9/44
<i>Pelikan</i>	Pelican	9/9/44
<i>Traube</i>	Bunch of Grapes	12/9/44
<i>Feldspat</i>	Felspar	14/9/44
<i>Kupfer</i>	Copper	16/9/44
<i>Schwefel</i>	Sulphur	16/9/44

The supply and agent-dropping operations by KG 200 have been well recorded in crew logbooks, but very few of the code names allotted to these operations have been noted as this was a very serious offence which breached security. Consequently the few shown above are valuable as they not only show that a linked series of operations shared similar code names, e.g. the last three, but also reveal the intensity of the efforts by KG 200 crews. The average distance flown on each of these missions was some 800 km.

Some other operations by other crews and aircraft:

<i>Parzival</i>	Percival	25/7/44
<i>Anti-Atlas</i>	Anti-Atlas	
<i>Koblenz</i>	Koblenz	22/7/44
<i>Blüte</i>	Blossom	5/8/44
<i>Sultan Alekpa</i>	Sultan Alekpa	11/8/44
<i>Mobtag</i>	Mobilisation	26/8/44
<i>Kleiner Wolf</i>	Little Wolf	31/8/44
<i>Grosser Wolf</i>	Big Wolf	
<i>Kluger Wolf</i>	Wise Wolf	
<i>Libanon I &amp; II</i>	Lebanon I & II	
<i>Rennstrecke</i>	Racetrack	
<i>Narwa I, II &amp; IV</i>	Narwa I, II & IV	





## FLIGHTS OF FANCY

### Operations KG 200 did *not* do

During the post-war years reports appeared, first in *RAF Flying Review* (1955 and 1956) and then in *The Air War* by Janusz Piekalkewicz, of long-range operations by Junkers transport aircraft. These stories originated only in a Report of the Air P/W Interrogation Unit, Ninth Air Force (Advanced) of 29 March 1945 entitled *FAG 5 Planes over Manchuria*, from the questioning of a man claiming to be a defecting Luftwaffe pilot named Baumgart. He told of flights by the two Ju 390s of Fernaufklärungsgruppe 5 in February 1944 to within 20 km, or 20 miles, of America's Atlantic coast and, in greater detail, of flights by Ju 290s to the Japanese puppet state of Manchukuo for which the aircraft were attached to KG 200.

The story of the Atlantic flight has been treated with scepticism by aviation historians. First by British intelligence reports of August 1944 and then Prof Kenneth Werrell in an article *World War II German Distance Flights; Record or Fraud* (Aerospace Historian, June 1988), but neither gives any useful detail. Werrell concluded, "The modest sources and numerous questions attending the New York flight strongly suggest that it did not take place."

Wolf Baumgart served with Fernaufklärungsgruppe (FAGr) 5 from August 1943 until April 1944. He told his interrogators how three Ju 290A-9s of FAGr 5 based at Mont-de-Marsan on the Biscay coast of France were flown back to Germany to be modified at Finsterwalde for special operations. All guns except one, dual controls and armour were removed from the aircraft and the fuel-

tankage was increased by 23 per cent, all completed within 48 hours. For the first of Baumgart's own flights, the aircrew consisted of himself as pilot, a radio-operator and a third man who was not identified but who gave navigational instructions whilst in the air. The first flight began at Odessa and returned to Mielec in Poland, the second a week later began and also ended at Mielec. The flight, said Baumgart, took 33 hours and flew over Lake Baikal and was guided for the last two hours by directional information from Tokyo. The other two Ju 290s, he said, took off from and returned to Posen; each flight carried a BMW 801 engine on the outward trip and alloy metals and rubber on return. Werrell points out that there was no mention in this account of any connection with KG 200, to which unit three Ju 290s were attached in March and May 1944 and later allocated the KG 200 unit codes; as if Baumgart was unaware of this.

Werrell sought to decide the probability of the 'Kommando Japan' flights by an analysis of performance and range of the aircraft and concluded that they were indeed possible.

The background to this tale cannot be simply summarised. Earlier, Deutsche Lufthansa had made 'proving flights' to the Far East. When discussions began between Germany and Japan about exchanges of technical expertise, several of the routes were again considered. They were from Kemi in Finland to Sakhalin (6,350 km), from Kirovgrad to Paoto near Hankow (6,125 km), from Southern Russia or the Crimea over the Bay of Bengal (7,000 km), using flying-boats, from Petsamo or Kirkenes in Finland to Tsitsihar in Manchukuo or a later route from Odessa or Zaporozhe to Paoto and Tokyo. In October Mayr flew a Fw 200 on an experimental flight of 6,400 km, from Kirkenes, but this operation was not carried through because Japan feared that the USSR might use invasion of its air space as a cause for war.

**207 Above:** A Junkers Ju 290A-5 or A-9 in service with FAGr. 5 while based at Mont-de-Marsan close to the Bay of Biscay in France. Aircraft from this unit and those of the Versuchsverband Ob.d.L. carried out much of the long-range strategic reconnaissance and agent insertion operations for the Abwehr and OKL in the mid-war years before the formation of KG 200 proper



Early in 1942 *Hptm* Heinz Braun commanded a transport unit at Tempelhof composed of aircrew from the Luftwaffe and Deutsche Lufthansa. This Lufttransportstaffel 290 flew two Ju 290s, seven Ju 90s, a Ju 252 and a Focke-Wulf Fw 200 on several secret missions for the Versuchsverband Ob.d.L. In March 1943, they transferred to Grosseto in Italy under the command of Lufttransportführer Mittelmeer. Braun was transferred in April 1943 to a new unit, FAGr 5, on the Biscay Coast which began operations in concert with U-boats in October, with Ju 290A-2s and A-3s. In November the 2./FAGr 5 became operational and the 4. Staffel was established for some six months, then six Ju 290s were transferred to DLH for duties including the transport of cargoes for *Reichsleiter* Martin Bormann. The other aircraft were taken over by the 1./KG 200.

At the end of 1943 the idea was raised again by OKL and on 4 January *Hptm* Braun, Staffelkapitän of 2./FAGr 5, was ordered to form a 'Kommando Japan'. He led DLH *Flugkapitän* Walter Mayr and Rudolf Blume and their crews to set up the unit at E-Stelle Rechlin, intending to fly Ju 290A-2/3 aircraft 9V+AK, 9V+IK and 9V+KK from Nautsi in Finland via Novya Zemlya and Lake Baikal to Japan, and return, each aircraft carrying two tonnes of tungsten. These proposals were entirely genuine and the transport plan was real. As we have seen, although the 'Japan Flight' came to nothing, Mayr made a trial flight from Tutow, base of XIV. Fliegerkorps to reconnoitre the aerodromes in the far North, at Vaasa, Kemi, Rovaniemi, Nautsi, Kirkenes and on return to Tutow a week later reported that Nautsi would be the most suitable for the operation of Ju 290s. A check of records shows a transfer of three new Ju 290A-9s from the FAGr 5 under the command of *Hptm* Heinz Braun, Staffelkapitän of the 2./FAGr 5 at Mont-de-Marsan, to KG 200; T9+VK on 16 March 1944, T9+WK on the 26th and T9+UK on 12 May. They were re-marked as A3+BB, A3+CB and A3+AB respectively. A3+AB and BB were both lost during Operation ELISTA, the third aircraft, CB, was destroyed in the south-east on 23 May 1944.

One commentator has given a little further tantalising information that a Ju 290A-9 (one of the two then held on charge by KG 200) began a flight from Grigorievka (Odessa) for Mukden in Manchukuo on 8 April. Whom can we believe?

Baumgart's fascinating story has been believed and repeated in several books by reputable aviation writers, none of whom has sought confirmation. His interrogators described the 24-year-old as "anxious to offer services for the allies, some of his statements should be accepted with reservation as they reflect confident exuberance...". A few relevant words were included in Air Ministry Intelligence ADI (K) Report No.398/1945 *A Short History of KG 200* derived from interrogation of *Oberst* Randel-Semper, Geschwader Operations Officer from June 1944. He confirmed that "operations which were discussed but not attempted were (a) Flights to America (b) Flights to Japan (c) Flights to area North of Singapore."

A number of authors have written that *Hptm* Heinz Braun and his crew flew a Ju 290 to Barcelona-Muntadas at the end of April 1945. In fact they were at Hörsching waiting for a special mission to be ordered by Luftflotte VI. Several writers, however, have included such an operation by Braun as true, mistaking a flight by a Ju 290A-5 of Deutsche Lufthansa for an imaginary one by Braun's Ju 290A-7. The DLH aircraft, D-AITR, had earlier served with Braun's 2./FAGr 5 as 9V+DK. The 'mistake', in at least one instance, provided a false reason for writings speculating on the 'escape' of Hitler and Eva.

Until early 1945, relations between Spain and the Axis Powers remained openly friendly and flights between Italy or Germany and Spain were regularly maintained despite the threat of attack by Allied fighters over the Mediterranean. But the Spanish Government was forced to accept an Axis defeat as unavoidable so, in March, Luftwaffe flights over Spanish territory were forbidden, but airline services continued by Lufthansa for a while, the Ju 290s with civil markings flown by crews from KG 200, the Allies well aware of the deception or so it has been reported. In fact the four-engined aircraft were flown by crews from DLH, even if they carried 'military' personnel, freight or documents. In August 1944 fear of attack by Allied fighters supporting DRAGOON brought about a change of policy; Ju 88s and Me 410s were to be used instead for a faster run from Italy to Spain. On 27 September three Ju 88s were allocated to the route, the point emphasised tragically the following night, 27/28 September, when a Fw 200D-2, D-AMHL, (*Flugkapitän* Helmut Limon) was shot down over France. The British might have been similarly accused of deception as British Overseas Airways Corporation flew a dozen Mosquitos to and from Sweden from February 1943 until the end of hostilities.

Ju 290A-5 D-AITR was flown to Spain by *Flugkapitän* Suzalek of DLH on 6 April 1945. A few enthusiasts made efforts to establish their belief — or supposition — that the aircraft with its comfortable 'civil' guise and internal fittings carried the Führer on the first leg of a journey to freedom. It is more likely that it carried valuables for safe-keeping. Suzalek was instructed to disregard the Spanish ban and turn around the *Bayern* without refuelling. He arrived at Muntadas in fog and overshot the runway, ending in a rice field with little damage to the aircraft which remained there until its future could be decided — which was its sale to the Spanish air force on 29 April 1950.

Martin Bormann, Director of the Nazi Party, organised the deposit of a great quantity of money and valuables in foreign banks, some of it to be transported from Germany or Italy to Spain by Ju 290. It is likely that the DLH aircraft were used for this purpose.

Under interrogation a German prisoner-of-war referred to the belief that Soviet Pe-2 light bombers, with other captured aircraft, were flown by KG 200 crews. It is likely that the occasional demonstration or trials of such aircraft by the 'Zirkus Rosarius' gave rise to this belief. No aircraft of this type was ever included in the Order of Battle of KG 200 or flown by its crews.



## Aircraft used by KG 200 and predecessor units

Type	W.Nr./Serial	Previous Code	KG 200 code	Staffel	Notes
Ar 96	?		A3+NA		KH Lange lgbk. Rahmel 25/7/44
Ar 96	?		A3+NB		KH Lange lgbk. Dedelstorf 12/5/44
Ar 96	?		A3+NC		Halstenbach lgbk. Dedelstorf 9/44
Ar 96	?		A3+NL		Halstenbach lgbk. Dedelstorf 9/44
Ar 196A-3	?		A3+AC		To Finland 1944. To Soviet Union 16/3/45
Ar 196A-3	?		A3+BC		Loaned to Finland. Returned 9/44
Ar 232A-06	W.Nr. 10008	L5+BR/G6+VY		2.	Crashed 14/12/44
Ar 232A-08	W.Nr. 10010	L5+FR		2.	Kommando Toska. Sieber lgbk 9/4/44
Ar 232B-04?	W.Nr. 100006	A3+QB		2.	Lange lgbk 30/2/45
Ar 232B-05	W.Nr. 110017	L5+ER/G6+?Y		1.	Lost on 'Zeppelin', 4/9/44 . Ofw Vierus.
Ar 232B-06?	W.Nr. 100008	G6+XY?		2.	Lange lgbk 19/1/45
Ar 232B-07	W.Nr. 110029	G6+YY	A3+RB	2.	Lange lgbk. (Noted as 305002 at Farnborough)
Ar 232B-09	W.Nr. 110031	G6+UY	A3+SB	2.	Ott lgbk. Shot down by nightfighter 25/4/45
Ar 234B-2	?	T5+GH		1.	Aufkl.Gr.Ob.d.L. To 1./Aufkl.Gr. 33
Ar 234B-2	W.Nr. 140142	T9+DH/SM+FB		1.	V.Ob.d.L. Lost 16km NW Alfonsine 11/4/45
Ar 234B-2	W.Nr. 140344	T9+EH/NM+BR		1.	V.Ob.d.L. Crashed Udine 16/4/45
Ar 234B-2	?	T9+FH		1.	V.Ob.d.L
Ar 234S12	W.Nr. 140112	T9+GH/GM+BL		1.	V.Ob.d.L
Ar 234B-2	W.Nr. 140154	T9+IH/SM+FN		1.	V.Ob.d.L 24/12/44
Ar 234B-2	W.Nr. 140151	T9+KH/SM+FK		1.	V.Ob.d.L
Ar 234B-2	W.Nr. 140152	T9+KH//SM+FL		1.	V.Ob.d.L
Ar 234V5	W.Nr. 130005	T9+LH/GK+IV		1.	V.Ob.d.L. Lost 28/8/44
Ar 234V7	W.Nr. 130007	T9+MH/GK+IX		1.	V.Ob.d.L. 11/44
Ar 234B-2	W.Nr. 140307	T9+??		1.	V.Ob.d.L. To Kdo Sperling
Ar 234B-2	W.Nr. 140459	T9+??		1.	V.Ob.d.L. Destroyed 10/2/45
Ar 234B-2	W.Nr. 140608	T9+GL		3.	V.Ob.d.L./OKL. To Kdo Bonow
Ar 234V15	W.Nr. 130025	T9+HL/PH+SW		3.	V.Ob.d.L./OKL. Destroyed 4/45
Ar 234V17	W.Nr. 130027	T9+LL/PH+SY		3.	V.Ob.d.L./OKL. Destroyed 4/45
Ar 240A	?	T5+MH		1.	Aufkl.Gr.Ob.d.L./V.Ob.d.L
Ar 240A-01	W.Nr. 240011	T5+?L/GL+QA		3.?	Crashed Frosine 16/2/43 as T5+YP
Ar 240A-02	W.Nr. 240012	GL+QB			VfH 1/44
Ar 240A-0	?	T9+GL		3.	V.Ob.d.L./OKL
Avia B71A	W.Nr. 156	SE+DP			Sieber lgbk. Rangsdorf 7/9/43
Avia B71	?	BH+DE			SB-3, in Sieber lgbk. Rangsdorf 7/9/43
Avia B71	?	VG+FB			Sieber lgbk. Rangsdorf 10/9/43
Bloch 161	?	T9+BB		Stab	First prototype. Crashed Oranienburg 10/5/44
Bü 131	?		A3+MP		Halstenbach lgbk. Dedelstorf 6/9/44
Bü 131	?		A3+MQ		Halstenbach lgbk. Dedelstorf 6/9/44
Bü 181	?		A3+ND		KH Lange lgbk. Dedelstorf 4/44
Bü 181	?		A3+NG		KH Lange lgbk. Dedelstorf 4/44
Bü 181	?		A3+NH		KH Lange lgbk. Dedelstorf 4/44
Bü 181	?		A3+NK		Halstenbach lgbk. Dedelstorf 6/9/44
Bü 181	?		A3+NS		KH Lange lgbk. Plauen 4/44
Bü 181	?		A3+NT		KH Lange lgbk. Rechlin 1/7/44
Bü 181	?		A3+NV		Halstenbach lgbk. Dedelstorf 11/44
Bü 181	?		A3+NY		Halstenbach lgbk. Dedelstorf 9/44
Bü 181	?		A3+NZ		KH Lange lgbk. Gatow 5/6/44
Bü 181	?		A3+OB		Halstenbach lgbk. Dedelstorf 10/44
Bü 181	?		A3+OK		Halstenbach lgbk. Pyritz 11/44
DFS 230	?	H4+2-27			
Do 18	?		RU+KH	3?	Not confirmed by documents
Do 17S	?	T5+FH			Aufkl.Gr/Ob.d.L. Shot down France 13/1/40
Do 17S	?	D-ARED	?		Aufkl.Gr/Ob.d.L. (Rowehl)



Type	W.Nr./Serial	Previous Code	KG 200 code	Staffel	Notes
Do 24	?		3Y+HT		Dörwald lgbk. 17.10.44 Bug am Rügen
Do 24	?		A3+??		
Do 215	?	T5+AC		1.	Aufkl.Gr/Ob.d.L. Finland 7/41
Do 215	?	T5+AH		1.	Aufkl.Gr/Ob.d.L. Finland 6/42
Do 215B-4	W.Nr. 0076?	T5+GH/NO+TZ		1.	Aufkl.Gr/Ob.d.L. Crashed Schorndorf 2/11/40
Do 215B-1	W.Nr. 0052	T5+?K/NO+TB		1.	VfH Oranienburg 4/42
Do 215B-4	W.Nr. 0004	T5+NM			Lost Millerow-Staroblsk 11/7/42
Do 215B	?	L2+LC		1.	Aufkl.Gr/Ob.d.L. Ex-8./LG 2. Lost 11/8/41
Do 215B	?	L2+KS		3.	Aufkl.Gr/Ob.d.L. Ex-8./LG 2. Lost 24/10/40
Do 215B	?	L2+AS		2.	Aufkl.Gr/Ob.d.L. Ex-8./LG 2. Lost 23/7/41
Do 215B	?	L2+ES		3.	Aufkl.Gr/Ob.d.L. Ex-8./LG 2. Lost 5/8/41
Do 217A-0	W.Nr. 2706	?			Aufkl.Gr./Ob.d.L. (Rowehl) 7/40
Do 335V3	W.Nr. 230003	T9+ZH		1.	V.Ob.d.L. Rechlin 4/44
Fi 156	?		A3+MB		Braun lgbk 8/2/45 Finow
Fi 156C	?	T9+EB		2.	V.Ob.d.L 17/12/43. Götz lgbk
Fi 156C	?	T9+FB		2.	V.Ob.d.L. 17/12/43. Götz lgbk
Fi 156C	?	T9+GB		2.	V.Ob.d.L 13/12/43. Götz lgbk
Fi 156	?	T9+VK		2.	Aufkl.Gr./Ob.d.L. Sieber lgbk
Fi 156	?	L3+AE			Possible. Sachtleben lgbk 3/5/45
Fi 156	?		?		Blown up by Germans at Morrin, 30/1/45
FW 44C	?		A3+LD		2 July 44 at Finsterwalde Lange/Braun lgbks
FW 44C	?		A3+MR		Halstenbach lgbk. Dedelstorf 9/44
FW 44C	?		A3+MU		Halstenbach lgbk. Dedelstorf 9/44
FW 44C	?		A3+MV		Halstenbach lgbk. Dedelstorf 9/44
FW 44C	?		A3+NM		Halstenbach lgbk. Dedelstorf 9/44
FW 56	?		A3+OE		Halstenbach lgbk. Pyritz 12/44
FW 58	?	T9+WB		Stab	V.Ob.d.L.
FW 190F-8	W.Nr. 581600		A3+MA	4.	Lost Nimwegen 28/9/44
FW 190	?		A3+LM	4.?	Lange lgbk
FW 190	?		A3+LN	4.?	Lange lgbk
FW 190	?		A3+LO	4.?	Lange lgbk
FW 190F-8	W.Nr. 581447		A3+LX	4.	
FW 190F-8	W.Nr. 581770		Black 7	10.	Lost Stolzenau 6/4/45
FW 190F-8	W.Nr. 933064		<C	14.	Crashed Stavanger 9/3/45
FW 190F-8	W.Nr. 583091		<<	9.	Crashed Dimbesen 5/4/45
FW 190F-8	W.Nr. 584035		Black 12	10.	MIA Dümmer See 5/4/45
FW 190F-8	W.Nr. 581772		< +E	9.	Crashed Nyllested, Denmark 11/2/45
FW 190F-8	W.Nr. 582179		Black 2	10.	Lost Stolzenau 6/4/45
FW 190F-8	W.Nr. 932189		Black 4	10.?	Lost Stolzenau 6/4/45
FW 190F-8	W.Nr. 581458				Lost Rechlin 28/6/44
FW 190A-5	W.Nr. 4415				Mistel
FW 190F-8	W.Nr. 581613				Mistel
FW 190A-8	W.Nr. 680150			6.	Mistel
FW 190A-8	W.Nr. 732100				Mistel. IV Gruppe. Tirstrup, Denmark 2/45
FW 190A-8/R6	W.Nr. 733682				Mistel. IV Gruppe. Tirstrup, Denmark 2/45
FW 190A-8	W.Nr. 733759				Mistel 3. With Ju 88A W.Nr. 2492. At Farnboro' as Air Min 77, 10/45
FW 190A-8	W.Nr. 680524				Mistel 3. II Gruppe. With Ju 88G-1 W.Nr. 714534
FW 190A-8	W.Nr. 960539				Mistel 3. II Gruppe. With Ju 88G-1 W.Nr. 714908
FW 190A-8	W.Nr. 730955		TO+KO		Mistel 3. II Gruppe. With Ju 88G-1 W.Nr. 712322
FW 190A-8	W.Nr. 380971				Mistel 3. II Gruppe. With Ju 88G-1 W.Nr. 714141
FW 190A-8	W.Nr. 731012				Mistel 3. With Ju 88G-1 W.Nr. 714414, NN+XT
FW 190A-8	W.Nr. 739222				Mistel 3. II Gruppe. With Ju 88G-1. Altengrabow 2/3/45
FW 190A-8	W.Nr. 173938				Mistel 3. II Gruppe. With Ju 88G-1 W.Nr. 714287
FW 190	W.Nr. 170650				Lange lgbk "bomb trials"



Type	W.Nr./Serial	Previous Code	KG 200 code	Staffel	Notes
FW 190	?	C1+MT ('C1+.T' unit code from 16/1/45)			Mistel. Ex 9./KG 66. 16/10/44.
FW 190	?	C1+MT			Ex KG 66. 16/12/44. Same aircraft as above?
FW 200V10	W.Nr. 0001	D-ASHH			VfH/Aufkl.Gr/Ob.d.L. (Rowehl)
FW 200V2	W.Nr. 2484	D-AETA			VfH/Aufkl.Gr/Ob.d.L. (Rowehl)
FW 200A-03	W.Nr. 2895	D-AMHC			VfH/Aufkl.Gr/Ob.d.L. (Rowehl)
FW 200C-1	W.Nr. 0003	BS+AH	?		Aufkl.Gr/Ob.d.L. (Rowehl) 3/40
Go 242	?		2-18		
He 72B-1	?	T9+IB			V.Ob.d.L.
He 111V4	W.Nr. 1968	D-AHAO			Rowehl
He 111C-03	W.Nr. 1830	D-AXAV			Rowehl
He 111V2	W.Nr. 715	D-ALIX			Rowehl
He 111H(?)	?	D-ADAG			Rowehl
He 111H-2	W.Nr. 2645	T5+EU			Aufkl.Gr./Ob.d.L. Lost England 17/1/41
He 111P-4	W.Nr. 1594	T5+OH			Aufkl.Gr./Ob.d.L. Shot down Scotland 22/2/40
He 111P	W.Nr. 1601	T5+RH			VfH Oranienburg 4/41
He 111H-6	?		A3+AC	2.	Ott/Sieber lgbks 17/10/44
He 111	?		A3+BC	8.	Ott/Lange/Sieber lgbk 20.1-4.5/45
He 111	?		A3+CC		
He 111H-16	?		A3+EC	2.	Sieber lgbk 13/9/44
He 111	?		A3+HC	2.	Lange/Ott lgbks. Stolp/Reitz. Gatow 20/4/45
He 111	?		A3+DB		Braun lgbk
He 111H-6	?		A3+FB		
He 111H	?		A3+KB	2.	Lange lgbk
He 111H	?		A3+PB		
He 111H	?		A3+UB		Braun lgbk
He 111H	?		A3+BD		Braun lgbk
He 111H-20	?		A3+DD		Kraemer lgbk. Finow 9/11/44
He 111H	?		A3+AF		Wörschach/Aigen 1945
He 111H-16	?		A3+LG		Kraemer lgbk. Wörschach/Aigen 8/11/44
He 111H	?		A3+LH		Kraemer lgbk. Finsterwalde, 3-10/2/45
He 111	?	T9+EB		Stab	V.Ob.d.L 27/10/43
He 111H-6	W.Nr. 4731	T9+EB/SP+OM		Stab	V.Ob.d.L 1/44
He 111H-6	?	T9+AK		2.	V.Ob.d.L
He 111H-6	WkNr 7680	T9+EK		2.	V.Ob.d.L. Lost 5/2/44
He 111H-11/5	?	T9+HK		2.?	Sieber lgbk. Rangsdorf 11/43
He 111H-11	?	T9+IK		2.?	Sieber lgbk. Rangsdorf 9/43
He 111H-3	?	T9+LK		2.	Sieber lgbk. Rangsdorf 9/43
He 111H-5	?	T9+MK		2.?	Sieber lgbk. Rangsdorf 9/43
He 111H-16	?	T9+NK		2.?	Sieber lgbk 2/44. Toska. Desert camouflage
He 111H	?	T9+PK		2.?	Sieber lgbk
He 111	?	T9+DL		2.	V.Ob.d.L/OKL
He 111	?	T9+EL		2.	V.Ob.d.L/OKL
He 111	?	T9+HL		2.	V.Ob.d.L/OKL 15/11/43
He 111H	W.Nr. 701467		?	?	Crashed 30km NE Deblin 22/7/45
He 111H	W.Nr. 7548		?	?	
He 111H-6	W.Nr. 7853	?	?	?	Destroyed Alten-Grabow 1/3/45
He 111H-16	?		?	?	Crashed Stolp-Reitz 30/1/45
He 111H-20	W.Nr. 701706(?)		?	?	Damaged Wormditt 13/12/44
He 115	?		A3+DE	?	Schleswig 8/5/45
He 115	?		BH+QK??		May be misinterpretation of 6H+OK
He 115	?		6H+OK	3.	Dörwald lgbk. Rissala, Finland 9/9/44
He 177A-5	?	K9+NL		3.	VfH Oranienburg
Ju W34	?		A3+NP	?	KH Lange lgbk. Dedelstorf 2/7/44
Ju 52/3m	?		A3+OJ	?	Halstenbach lgbk. Dedelstorf 11/44
Ju 52/3m	?		1Z+GK	?	Ott lgbk. Finow 18/3/45
Ju 86P	?	D-APEW		?	Rowehl. Forcelanded Rovno, Poland 15/4/41



Type	W.Nr./Serial	Previous Code	KG 200 code	Staffel	Notes
Ju 86R-1	W.Nr. 0285	T5+WB/BO+BJ		1.	VfH Oranienburg 1/42
Ju 86P	W.Nr. 0292	T5+??/DA+AQ		1.	VfH Oranienburg 1/42
Ju 86P?	W.Nr. 0293	K9+IH		1.	VfH Oranienburg 8/41
Ju 86R-1	W.Nr. 0454	T5+RM/DD+GB		1.	Dessau 11/42. Later T5+VH
Ju 86	W.Nr. 0479	K9+MH		1.	VfH Oranienburg 5/42
Ju 86B/Z	W.Nr. 0952	T5+JB/DD+VL		1.	Ex D-AGEY. VfH Oranienburg 9/40
Ju 86	W.Nr. 0498	T5+?M/DB+RH		1.	Crashed Böskum 21/12/42
Ju 86R	?	T5+SM		4.	Aufkl.Gr.Ob.d.L. To 1./Aufkl.Gr. 100
Ju 86R-1	W.Nr. 5131	T9+IL/DK+YV		3.	V.Ob.d.L/OKL Damaged Breslau 5/6/44
Ju 86P/R	?	T9+JL		2.	V.Ob.d.L/OKL
Ju 86P/R	?	T9+NL		3.	V.Ob.d.L/OKL
Ju 86P/R	W.Nr. 0498?	T9+PM		3.	V.Ob.d.L/OKL
Ju 87	?		A3+ND		Braun lgbk
Ju 87	?		NE+RZ		Halstenbach lgbk
Ju 88V13	W.Nr. 005	GU+AH		2.	V.Ob.d.L. 1940
Ju 88V14	W.Nr. 0006	D-APSF		2.	V.Ob.d.L. 1940
Ju 88V23	W.Nr. 0023	NK+AO		2.	V.Ob.d.L. 1940
Ju 88A-1	W.Nr. 0246	K9+IH		1.	VfH Oranienburg
Ju 88D	?	K9+PH		1.	VfH. Rechlin 8/42
Ju 88B-0/V24	W.Nr. 0024	K9+QH		1.	VfH Oranienburg. D-ASGQ/NK+AP
Ju 88B-0	?	K9+RH		1.	VfH Oranienburg
Ju 88V30	W.Nr. 0030	K9+TH		1.	VfH Oranienburg
Ju 88C-7	?	K9+VH		1.	VfH Oranienburg
Ju 88A-5	W.Nr. 0672	K9+WH		1.	Lost 31/1/42 near Baku
Ju 88B-0/V26	W.Nr. 0026	K9+XH		1.	VfH Oranienburg 2/42
Ju 88B-0		K9+RL		3.	VfH Oranienburg
Ju 88A-5	W.Nr. 0382	T5+?K/VB+KJ		1.	VfH Oranienburg 14/3/41
Ju 88A-5	W.Nr. 0615	T5+?K/VB+KM		1.	Lost England 28/5/41
Ju 88D-2	W.Nr. 0852	T5+?K/VB+DM		1.	Lost Leningrad 6/7/41
Ju 88D-1	W.Nr. 0774	T5+BU/DE+DV		1.	VfH Oranienburg
Ju 88D-2	W.Nr. 0793	T5+NQ/SK+QO		1.	Lost 18/12/41
Ju 88D-6	W.Nr. 430067	T5+LM		1.	V.Ob.d.L
Ju 88	?	T9+AH		1.	V.Ob.d.L
Ju 88	?	T9+CH		1.	V.Ob.d.L
Ju 88B-0/V28	W.Nr. 0028	T9+DH/GB+ND		2.	V.Ob.d.L. Lost Brest 14/8/42. Also Götz lgbk?
Ju 88T-3	?	T9+EH		1.	V.Ob.d.L
Ju 88B-0	?	T9+FH		1.	V.Ob.d.L
Ju 88T	W.Nr. 0678	T9+FH/GM+ZC		1.	V.Ob.d.L. Lost 20/4/43
Ju 88	?	T9+FH		1.	V.Ob.d.L
Ju 88	?	T9+HH		2.	V.Ob.d.L. Götz lgbk
Ju 88	?	T9+MH		1.	V.Ob.d.L
Ju 88A-4	?	T9+KK		2.	V.Ob.d.L
Ju 88T-1	?	T9+EL		3.	V.Obd.L./OKL 2/45
Ju 88	?	T9+FL		3.	V.Ob.d.L/OKL
Ju 88	?	T9+GL		3.	V.Ob.d.L/OKL
Ju 88	W.Nr. 3652		?	?	Lost Hagenau 3/2/45
Ju 88	W.Nr. 8590		?	?	Lost Hagenau 3/2/45
Ju 88	?	C1+AT		?	Saalfeld lgbk. Ex KG 66. 24/2/45
Ju 88	?	C1+BT		?	Saalfeld lgbk. Ex KG 66. 2/3/45
Ju 88 Mistel 1	?	C1+DT		?	Saalfeld lgbk. Ex KG 66, with Bf 109. 15/11/44
Ju 88A-4	W.Nr. 3808			?	Mistel 1. With Bf 109. Altengrabow 2/3/45
Ju 88A-4	W.Nr. 2565			?	Mistel 1. With Bf 109. Altengrabow 2/3/45
Ju 88A-4	W.Nr. 144032			?	Mistel. II Gruppe. Tirstrup, Denmark 5/45
Ju 88G-1	W.Nr. 714633	PI+XI	Red 11	6.	Mistel. II Gruppe. Tirstrup, Denmark 5/45
Ju 88G-1	W.Nr. 714652			6.?	Mistel. II Gruppe
Ju 88G-1	W.Nr. 714656			?	Mistel. II Gruppe. Tirstrup, Denmark 5/45



Type	W.Nr./Serial	Previous Code	KG 200 code	Staffel	Notes
Ju 88G-1	?	??+CP	White 8	6.	Mistel. II Gruppe. Tirstrup, Denmark 2/45
Ju 88A-3	?		A3+NB	?	
Ju 88A-4	W.Nr. 0537		?	?	Lost Taars, Denmark 16/2/45
Ju 88C-2	W.Nr. 170492		?	?	I Gruppe. Lost 35km SE Bergamo 13/8/44
Ju 88G-1	W.Nr. 714230		?	?	Lost Burg bei Magdeburg 19/2/45
Ju 188D-2	?	T5+DK		2.	Aufkl.Gr.Ob.d.L. To 2./Aufkl. Gr. 100
Ju 188D-2	?	T5+HK		2.	Aufkl.Gr.Ob.d.L. To 2./Aufkl. Gr. 100
Ju 188D-2	?	T5+LK		2.	Aufkl.Gr.Ob.d.L. To Stab/FAGr. 33
Ju 188	?		A3+WN	?	
Ju 188	?		A3+WB	?	Braun lgbk. 12-18/7/44 Finsterwalde
Ju 188	?		A3+TB	?	
Ju 188	W.Nr. 180486		A3+BD	4.	Kdo Olga. Crashed Erfurt 27/11/44
Ju 188	?		A3+BD	4.	Kdo Olga. Lost Western Front 9/12/44
Ju 188	W.Nr. 260399		A3+LD	4.	Lost between Erfurt and Echterdingen 2/2/45
Ju 188E-1	?		A3+MD	4.	Kdo Olga. Crashed 1/45
Ju 188	?		A3+ND	?	Kracmer lgbk. Finow 19/10/44
Ju 188	W.Nr. 180461		A3+OD	4.	Kdo Olga. Lost Rhein-Main 31/12/44-1/45
Ju 188E-1	W.Nr. 260542		A3+QD	4.	Kdo Olga. Shot down nr Diest, Belgium 23/1/45.
Ju 188D-2	W.Nr. 160062		A3+RD	4.	Kdo Carmen. Lost Bergamo 19/9/44
Ju 188A-2	W.Nr. 170622		A3+TD	4.	Carmen. Shot down by nightfighter, Italy 4/45
Ju 188	W.Nr. 170455		?	?	Lost 3/6/44
Ju 188	?	?	T9+KK	2.	MIA 23/3/44
Ju 188F-1	?	T9+DH		1.	V.Ob.d.L
Ju 188F-1	?	T9+GH		1.	V.Ob.d.L
Ju 188F-1	?	T9+LH		1.	V.Ob.d.L
Ju 188	?	T9+OH		1.	V.Ob.d.L
Ju 188	?	T9+KK		2.	V.Ob.d.L
Ju 188D-2	W.Nr. 180444		?	4.	Kdo Carmen? MIA Italy 21/3/45
Ju 188A-2	W.Nr. 180447		?	?	Damaged Barkenbrück 8/3/45
Ju 188	W.Nr. 180461		?	4.	
Ju 188	W.Nr. 150235	F6+IP	?		(6.(F)/122 under KG200). Lost 13/9/44
Ju 188	W.Nr. 260553 }		?	?	Both strafed and destroyed at Alten-Grabow, 1/
Ju 188	W.Nr. 260186 }		?	?	3/45
Ju 188	W.Nr. 250522		?	?	25% damaged in bad landing 14/2/45
Ju 252	W.Nr. 0008	DF+BT/T9+SK		2.	Crashed Rumania 26/6/44
Ju 252A	?	T9+AB	?	2.	V.Ob.d.L. Götz lgbk
Ju 290A-1	W.Nr. 0153	T9+FK/SB+QC		2.	Bombed and destroyed at Tours 5/2/44
Ju 290A-3	W.Nr. 0160	9V+BH/9V+AK		?	
Ju 290A-3	W.Nr. 0161	9V+DK		?	Crashed in Spain 26.12.43
Ju 290A-4/V7	W.Nr. 0165	PJ+PS	A3+HB	?	Actually PI+PS but marked as noted. 'Alles Kaputt'. Braun lgbk
Ju 290A-4	W.Nr. 0167	9V+HK		?	FAGr 5. MIA Eastern Front 14/6/44
Ju 290A-5	W.Nr. 0170	9V+DH		?	Von Pechmann lgbk 14/4/44-5/5/45
Ju 290A-7	W.Nr. 0181	9V+GK		?	With KG 200 10/7-10/8/44. Destroyed on ground at Dessau, 16/8/44
Ju 290A-9	W.Nr. 0182	T9+UK	A3+AB	1.	Elista. Lost Eastern Front 11/6/44
Ju 290A-9	W.Nr. 0183	T9+VK	A3+BB	1.	
Ju 290A-9	W.Nr. 0185	T9+WK	A3+CB	1.	Braun lgbk. Lost Eastern Front 23/5/44
Ju 290A-7	W.Nr. 0186	9V+FH	A3+OB	1.	Sachtleben/von Pechmann lgbks. At Finow 29/10/44, Flensburg 5/5/45. To UK as AM 6
Ju 290A-7	W.Nr. 0190	9V+MK	A3+PB	1.	White codes. Braun lgbk. "20% damaged 20/2/45 in collision with Bf 109 at Hildesheim"
Ju 290	?		A3+DC	?	14/12/44 Kraemer lgbk
Ju 352	?	T9+AB		Stab	V.Ob.d.L
Ju 352A-1	?	T9+CB		Stab	V.Ob.d.L
Ju 352	?		A3+HN	5.	



Type	W.Nr./Serial	Previous Code	KG 200 code	Staffel	Notes
Ju 352	?		A3+AB	?	I. Gruppe
Ju 390V-2	?	?	?	?	Noted in Eisermann lgbk
Ju 388V32	W.Nr. 300295	T9+DL		3.	V.Ob.d.L/OKL
Kl 35	?		A3+MN	?	
Kl 35	?		A3+MO	?	Halstenbach lgbk. Dedelstorf 9/44
Kl 35	?		A3+NI	?	Halstenbach lgbk. Dedelstorf 9/44
Kl 35	?		A3+NJ	?	Halstenbach lgbk. Dedelstorf 9/44
LeO H.246	?	24+62	A3+KC	3.	Dörwald lgbk 25.6.44 Bug
LeO H.246	?	24+64	A3+EC	3.	Probable KG 200 code
LeO H.246	?	24+61	A3+HC	3.	Dörwald lgbk 16.8.44 Rissala
LeO H.246	?	24+63?	A3+GE	3.	KH Lange lgbk. Dedelstorf 17/7/44
Bf 108	?		A3+LC	?	Halstenbach lgbk. Dedelstorf 9/44
Bf 108	?		A3+LE	?	Halstenbach lgbk. Dedelstorf 9/44
Bf 108	?		A3+OI	?	Halstenbach lgbk. Celle 11/44
Bf 108	?	T9+XK		2.	V.Ob.d.L
Bf 108	W.Nr. 1670			?	
Bf 109F-4	W.Nr. 6380			?	II Gruppe. Mistel 8/3/45. Lost Göritz
Bf 109	W.Nr. 10055			?	
Bf 109	W.Nr. 737989			?	Lost Hagenow 3/2/45
Bf 109	W.Nr. 13149			?	Lost Hagenow 3/2/45
Bf 109F	?		C1+XT	?	Saalfeld lgbk. Mistel. Ex 9./KG 66 code
Bf 109	?	T9+BL		3.	V.Ob.d.L/OKL
Bf 109	?	T9+CL		3.	V.Ob.d.L/OKL
Bf 110	W.Nr. 3163	K9+BH		1.	VfH. At Messerschmitt, Augsburg, 7/40
Me 410	?	T9+AL		3.	V.Ob.d.L/OKL 25/5/44
S.M. 75	?		AI+AZ	?	Could be D-AIAZ - Sieber lgbk c/n 32060/ mm 60540 or 60539 according to Italian sources. Both long-range models, both tall tails, Alfa Romeo 128 RC.18 engines, no turrets.
Fh 104	?	T9+SB		Stab	V.Ob.d.L
Si 204D	?	T9+DB		Stab	V.Ob.d.L
Si 204D	?	T9+SB		Stab	V.Ob.d.L
Si 204D-1	?	D-SNAY	A3+LB/D-OWKA		Old style red/white/black bands applied to tail
Si 204	?		A3+FD	?	Braun lgbk
Si 204	?		A3+XD	?	Braun lgbk 25/1/45
Si 204	?		A3+GF	?	Braun lgbk
Si 204	?		SR+AV	?	Ott lgbk. 30/4/45 Grossenbrode
Spitfire PR.XI	MB945	T9+BB		Stab	V.Ob.d.L. To 2.Staffel?
Mosquito	?	T9+XB		Stab	V.Ob.d.L. To 2.Staffel?
P-38G	?	T9+XB		Stab	V.Ob.d.L. To 2.Staffel?
P-51B/C	?	T9+CK		2.	V.Ob.d.L/OKL
Spitfire IX	?	T9+EK		2.	V.Ob.d.L/OKL
P-47D-2-RA	42-22490	T9+FK		2.	V.Ob.d.L/OKL. Recovered at end of war
Typhoon	?	T9+GK		2.	V.Ob.d.L/OKL
P-51C	?	T9+HK		2.	V.Ob.d.L/OKL
Spitfire IX	?	T9+KK		2.	V.Ob.d.L/OKL
P-47D-11-RE	42-75971	T9+LK		2.	V.Ob.d.L/OKL. Recovered at end of war
F-5E Lightning	44-23725	T9+MK		2.	V.Ob.d.L/OKL. Recovered at end of war
P-47D	?	T9+PK		2.	V.Ob.d.L/OKL
P-51B/C	?	T9+PK		2.	V.Ob.d.L/OKL
Typhoon	0549(?)	T9+?K		2.	V.Ob.d.L/OKL
Typhoon	0956(?)	T9+?K		2.	V.Ob.d.L/OKL
La 5	?	T9+?K		2.	V.Ob.d.L/OKL

While this is the most comprehensive listing of aircraft used by KG 200 and its predecessor units published to date, it should be recognised that other aircraft were also used. All those noted here are confirmed by photographs or other documentary evidence such as logbooks or loss lists. **NOTE:** Refer to page 66 for details of B-17 and B-24 aircraft used by KG 200

# Known personnel losses of KG 200

Date	Aircraft Type	Location	Crew names	Notes
<b>I Gruppe</b>				
14/3/44	?	Eastern Med	<i>Fhj</i> Fw Hubert Schulz <i>Uffz</i> Martin Ollhoff <i>Ogefr</i> Karl-Heinz Fleckner <i>Ogefr</i> Friedhelm Witte	POW POW POW POW
23/3/44	Ju 188 T9+KK	Western Med	<i>Lt</i> Alfred Lux <i>Oblt</i> Hans-Georg Lubrich <i>Ofw</i> Josef Eggl <i>Fw</i> Franz Grossmann <i>Ogefr</i> Manfred Kirtzel <i>Ogefr</i> Günter Scheide	MIA MIA MIA MIA MIA MIA
11/4/44	?	Helmstedt	<i>Uffz</i> Helmut Primon <i>Ofw</i> Joseph Rack	KIA on ground KIA on ground
23/5/44	Ju 290 W.Nr. 0185	South Russia	<i>Fw</i> Willi Cremer	MIA
3/6/44	Ju 188 W.Nr. 170455	Rodewig/Plauen	<i>Gefr</i> Karl Hausmann <i>Flgr</i> Hans Giebel <i>Ogefr</i> Theodor Lindner <i>Flgr</i> Horst Mathes <i>Gefr</i> Hermann Hemmerich	KIA KIA KIA KIA KIA
4/6/44	?	Finsterwalde	<i>Fw</i> Walter Winkler	KIA
11/6/44	Ju 290 W.Nr. 0182 A3+AB	South Russia	<i>Lt</i> Heinrich Jenichen <i>Fw</i> Gerhard Thon <i>Ofw</i> Hans Wiedeler <i>Ofw</i> Willi Melzer <i>Uffz</i> Erich Glomsda <i>Ofw</i> Bruno Goergen <i>Uffz</i> Heinrich Fritzges <i>Ogefr</i> Hans-Walter Melcher	MIA MIA MIA MIA MIA MIA MIA MIA
14/6/44	Ju 290 W.Nr. 0167 9V+HK	South Russia	<i>Ofw</i> Herbert Möller <i>Lt</i> Wilhelm Wagner <i>Hptm</i> Hans Hansen <i>Ofw</i> August-Karl Hermann <i>Uffz</i> Werner Adolphy <i>Ogefr</i> Adolf Schmitt <i>Ogefr</i> Helmut Zeuner <i>Ogefr</i> Karl von Hoegen	MIA MIA MIA Gundlach MIA MIA MIA MIA MIA
26/6/44	Ju 252 W.Nr. 0008 T9+SK? Accident	Petroseni, Rumania	<i>Lt</i> Bruno Stellbrink <i>Ofw</i> Alfred Deutscher <i>Ofw</i> Alfons Braun <i>Fw</i> Paul Schweizer <i>Uffz</i> Gustav Schwiertert <i>Uffz</i> Wilhelm Lott <i>Ofw</i> Friedrich Adam	Inj Inj Inj Inj K Inj Inj
22/7/44	He 111H-20 W.Nr. 701467	30km NE Deblin	<i>Oblt</i> Hugo Sensburg <i>Fw</i> Gerhard Heiermann <i>Fhj</i> Fw Fritz Bernhardt <i>Uffz</i> Karl Schmid	KIA KIA KIA KIA
13/8/44	Ju 88 W.Nr. 170492	35km SE Bergamo	<i>Ofw</i> Heinz Kernhoff <i>Lt</i> Otto Klingohr <i>Ogefr</i> Leonhard Abraham <i>Gefr</i> Horst Seifert <i>Uffz</i> Heinz Bartsch	KIA KIA KIA MIA KIA



Date	Aircraft Type	Location	Crew names	Notes
27/8/44	Non-operational	Medias, Rumania	Uffz Wolfgang Härter	M
			Ogefr Franz Valentin	M
		Petroseni, Rumania	Ofw Fritz Adam	M
4/9/44	Ar 232B-05	Kuklovo, Russia	Ofw Helmut Vierus	MIA
	W.Nr. 110017, L5+ER		Fw Gerhard Tiedt	MIA
			Uffz Gerhard Haberecht	MIA
			Uffz Wilhelm Braun	MIA
			Uffz Gerhard Schneider	MIA
			Ogefr Eugen Hetterich	MIA
13/9/44	Ju 188D-2 W.Nr. 150235	?	Lt Gottfried Heene	KIA
	F6+IP, 6.(F)/122		Ogefr Helmut Scheingraber	KIA
			Uffz Walter Jesko	KIA
			Uffz Ernst Wehmeier	-KIA
19/9/44	Ju 188D-2 W.Nr. 160062	Bergamo	Oblt Horst Dümcke	K
	A3+RD		Uffz Horst Bomke	K
			Ofw Ewald Gladeck	Inj
8/10/44	Accident	Montabaur	Ofw Wilhelm Busch	K
2/11/44	?	3km Gross-Schimanen	Oblt Fritz Reese	KIA
			Ofw Otto Röhrig	KIA
			Ofw Herbert Althoff	KIA
			Fw Max Friedel	KIA
			Uffz Alfred Schraum	MIA
7/11/44	?	Hungary	Ofw Joachim Stöhrig	KIA
			Ofw Peter Strack	MIA
			Uffz Heinz Mettler	KIA
27/11/44	Ju 188 W.Nr. 180486	Erfurt	Lt Karl-Theodor Kuesmaul?	K
	A3+BD Accident		Uffz Ernst Eisennardt	K
			Uffz Hermann Klein	K
			Uffz Alfred Kölbel	K
9/12/44	Ju 188 A3+BD	Western Front	Ofw Willi Blüthgen	MIA
			FhjOfw Konrad Ellmer	MIA
			Ofw Helmut Klimk	KIA
			Ofw Kurt Stegmann	MIA
			Uffz Stefan Gessner	MIA
13/12/44	He 111H-20 W.Nr. 701706	Wormditt	Uffz Arthur Kubitsa	WIA
14/12/44	Ar 232A-06 W.Nr. 110008	Jesau	Uffz Heinz Modes	WIA
24/12/44	Bombing raid on Rhein-Main		Ofw Hans-Joachim Fecht	KIA
	All killed on ground		Uffz Kurt Tischer	KIA
			Uffz Rudolf Linke	KIA
			Fw Alois Seif	KIA
25/12/44	Drowned - accident	Bug am Rügen	Ogefr Hubert Janshen	
	Drowned - accident		Ofw Ernst Richter	
	Drowned - accident		Ogefr Erwin Rakus	
31/12/44	Ju 188D-2 A3+OD	Rhein-Main	Ofw Karl Ehmann	K
	W.Nr. 180461. Accident		Fw Herbert Brauner	K
4/1/45	Ju 188A-2 A3+TD	Italy	Gefr Siegfried Mühlhoff	MIA
	W.Nr. 170622 Shot down by		Uffz Berthold Pradel	KIA
	nightfighter		Fw Erich Bussmann	KIA
			Uffz Robert Hnida	MIA
			Ofw Andreas Eck	MIA
23/1/45	Ju 188 W.Nr. 260542	Diest, Belgium	Fw Heinz Hauck	POW
	A3+QD		Fw Kurt Wuttge	POW
			Fw Max Griessmann	POW
			Fw Heinrich Hoppe	POW
23/1/45	Not in action	Mohrunen, East Prussia	Gefr Günter Heimlich	M
23/1/45	Not in action	Lippstadt, East Prussia	Gefr Franz Grobuschek	M

Date	Aircraft Type	Location	Crew names	Notes
2/2/45	Ju 188 W.Nr. 260399 A3+LD Accident	Crashed between Erfurt-Echterdingen	Ofw Siegfried Rausch Fw Lothar Klein Ofw Philipp Segeth Fw Valentin Heinz Fw Max Friedel	M M M M M
9/2/45	B-17F(?) A3+CE	Echterdingen	Ofw Karl Knappenschneider Ofw Georg Joachim Fw Richard Rosenfeld Uffz Johann König Ofw Eduard Siensen Uffz Wilhelm Frielingsdorf Ofw Fritz Burnickl Uffz Karl-Heinz Henning Fw Friedrich Seeger Uffz Werner Wolfrum	KIA KIA KIA KIA KIA KIA KIA MIA MIA KIA
3/3/45	B-17G, A3+BB Shot down by nightfighter	Luvigny, France	Oblt Gerhard Beudel Fhr Helmut Schenderlein Uffz Werner Hoff Fw Willi Helmdach Gefr Karl-Heinz Mehl Uffz Alfred Weber Ofw Karl Buch Uffz Kurt Böttcher Uffz Wilhelm Lott Fw Walter Rätzer Fw Herbert Adams	KIA (FAGr. 5) KIA POW POW KIA KIA KIA POW POW POW POW
12/3/45	?	Parndorf	Oblt Herbert Bertram Uffz Kurt Lisker Uffz Hans Ott Ofw Werner Neumeister	KIA KIA KIA KIA
13/3/45	He 111 W.Nr. ???747	Göritz/Oder	Uffz Heinz Rittler Uffz Adolf Gerads	KIA MIA
21/3/45	Ju 188D-2 W.Nr. 180444	Italy	Hptm Heinz Domach Fw Walter Buchheister Uffz Heinz Jacobs Fw Fritz Panke Uffz Hans Bottstedt	MIA MIA MIA MIA MIA
22/3/45	He 111 W.Nr. 7540	Göritz/Oder	Uffz Heinz Schrick	KIA
<b>II Gruppe</b>				
19/6/44	? Accident	Stolp-Reitz	Fhj Uffz Ferdinand Kirchhoff	Inj
28/6/44	FW 190F-8 Accident W.Nr. 581458	Rechlin	Ofw Erich Meier	W
21/7/44	7. Staffel Glider troops, all at Vassieux, France			
	Stabsarzt Max Burkard	KIA	Uffz Albert Schreiter	KIA
	Gefr Erich Peter	KIA	Flgr Günther Mayer	KIA
	Ogefr Albert Weigel	KIA	Gefr Hermann Groth	KIA
	Gefr Horst Gleichfeld	KIA	Gefr Friedrich Horn	KIA
	Uffz Rudolf Dreyer	KIA	Gefr Hermann Weeber	KIA
	Uffz Alfred Barth	KIA	Uffz Theo Klüner	KIA (6.Staffel)
	Ogefr Philip Heineken	KIA	Gefr Bernhard Nowack	KIA} These all in glider crash
	Fw Helmut Hädicke	KIA	Uffz Werner Schäfer	KIA}
	Ogefr Paul Haupt	KIA	Ogefr Günter de Rouck	KIA}
	Ogefr Paul Schmidt	KIA	Ogefr Wolfram Weck	KIA}
	Gefr Willi Krüger	KIA	Flgr Willy Karg	KIA}
	Fw Karl Deckert	WIA	Fw Walter Gehring	WIA
	Fw Otto Bötzel	WIA		



Date	Aircraft Type	Location	Crew names	Notes
30/7/44	7. Staffel	Voreppe, France	<i>Ogefr</i> Arno Neumann	DOW
20/8/44	7. Staffel	Paris	<i>Ofw</i> Alfred Schütz	MIA
	7. Staffel	Paris	<i>Ogefr</i> Konrad Berg	MIA
25/8/44	7. Staffel	Muizon	<i>Obli</i> Rudolf Bading	MIA
	7. Staffel		<i>Ogefr</i> Willi Fäsche	MIA
	7. Staffel		<i>Fw</i> Helmut Damm	MIA
	7. Staffel		<i>Uffz</i> Werner Laub	WIA
	7. Staffel		<i>Ogefr</i> Friedrich Biederstädt	WIA
	7. Staffel		<i>Ogefr</i> Horst Plaga	WIA
	7. Staffel		<i>Ogefr</i> Karl Fleischmann	WIA
	7. Staffel		<i>Uffz</i> Hans Krausold	WIA
28/9/44	FW 190 W.Nr. 581600 A3+MA	Nimwegen	<i>Lt</i> Herbert Leschanz	KIA
3/2/45	Ju 88 W.Nr. 3652	Hagenow	<i>Fw</i> Willi Kallhoff	KIA
			<i>Fw</i> Franz Fischl	KIA
3/2/45	Ju 88 W.Nr. 8590	Hagenow	<i>Ogefr</i> Erich Frezia	KIA
			<i>Ogefr</i> Paul Giensa	KIA
			<i>Ofhr</i> Franz Pietschmann	KIA
			<i>Ofw</i> Ernst Rübsax	KIA
3/2/45	Bf 109 W.Nr. 10053	Hagenow	<i>Ogefr</i> Joachim Uhlig	KIA (KG 30)
3/2/45	Bf 109 W.Nr. 737989	Hagenow	<i>Obli</i> Otto Barkhardt	KIA (KG 30)
3/2/45	Bf 109 W.Nr. 13149	Hagenow	<i>Ofw</i> Arnold Kiskn (?)	KIA (KG 30)
16/2/45	Ju 88A-4 W.Nr. 0537 Accident	Taars, Denmark	<i>Uffz</i> Joachim Beyer	K
			<i>Uffz</i> Ludwig Dahg	K
			<i>Fw</i> Friedrich Munkel	K
			<i>Uffz</i> Erich Fugmann	K
19/2/45	Ju 88G-1 Accident W.Nr. 714230	Burg bei Magdeburg	<i>Fw</i> Hermann Stolle	K
			<i>Uffz</i> Herbert Fritsch	K
			<i>Uffz</i> Franz Baldinger	K
			<i>Uffz</i> Robert Dahinten	K
8/3/45	Ju 188A-2 W.Nr. 180447	Barkenbrück	<i>Uffz</i> Theodor Post	KIA
8/3/45	Bf 109 W.Nr. 6380	Göritz	<i>Fw</i> Friedhelm Elger	MIA
<b>III Gruppe</b>				
11/2/45	FW 190F-8 W.Nr. 581772 < +E. Accident	Nyllested, Denmark	<i>Uffz</i> Hans Rump	Inj
9/3/45	FW 190F-8 W.Nr. 933064 <+C. Accident	Stavanger	<i>Fw</i> Josef Wupping	Inj
5/4/45	FW 190F-8 W.Nr. 583091 <<+. Accident	Dimbesen	<i>Uffz</i> Hans-Werner Schmidt	K
5/4/45	? Accident	Dimbersen	<i>Uffz</i> Uve Dethlefs	K
5/4/45	FW 190F-8 W.Nr. 584035 Black 12	Dümmer See	<i>Ofw</i> Alois Fuchs	MIA
6/4/45	FW 190F-8 W.Nr. 581770 Black 7	Stolzenau	<i>Lt</i> Hans Gering	KIA
6/4/45	FW 190F-8 W.Nr. 932189 Black 4	Stolzenau	<i>Fhr</i> Walter Massel	KIA
6/4/45	FW 190F-8 W.Nr. 582179 Black 2	Stolzenau	<i>Uffz</i> Ludwig Stimmler	KIA

*This list is far from comprehensive but uses all known records*