

my 'Gruppe' was chosen to be re-trained on this pattern of aircraft in May 1944. Unfortunately, I was unable to accompany them, because I then had to take over the 'Geschwader'. After the 'Gruppe' had already started re-training and some of the pilots were already accustomed to this pattern of aircraft, and others were still re-training, an order was suddenly received from Supreme Command: "This aircraft will not be employed as a fighter, but as a bomber." So after we were already up to our necks in trouble this type of aircraft began to be tried but as a bomber, as a fast bomber, to be exact. A fierce struggle went on between Air Staff Officers and the FUHRER. But they stuck to it at the time, that the aircraft was to be tried as a bomber. It was badly suited to that or not suited at all; its maximum load was one 500 kg bomb, and its flying time barely an hour.

QUESTION: What was its consumption of fuel compared to that of an ordinary Messerschmitt?

ANSWER: Of course, with those turbine aircraft the consumption of fuel is terrific, corresponding with the performance. The aircraft needs about 1800 litres of fuel to be able to fly for two hours; that's to say about twice as much as an ordinary twin-engined aircraft; but ... that you can fill it up with anything combustible. Diesel oil, crude oil and one can therefore obviate the need for all kinds of fuel, etc. In May last year there was still no acute shortage of petrol, there was still sufficient petrol available. Meanwhile the aircraft was actually employed as a bomber and dropped an odd 500 kg bomb here and there. But as there was also no bomb-sight for use at this speed, they didn't hit anything and now they have at last reached the point of saying that the aircraft is to be employed solely as a fighter, now when it is already too late.

Simultaneously with this experimental employment of the '262' as a fighter, the Me 163, a peculiar looking aircraft of which the principle of propulsion is completely different from the Me 262, was sent into operation. The '163' which is armed with three (?) 3 cm cannon, is entirely a rocket aircraft with proper rocket-propulsion. It has broken entirely new ground. It retains hardly any similarity to an ordinary aircraft; it no longer has an elevator at all, and that accounts for its peculiar shape. The elevator is incorporated in the aileron which can be set to alter the direction of flight according to the height. This aircraft may possibly play a tremendous part in the future as a so-called specific target-fighter or Flying Flak. The speed of this type of aircraft amounts to about 1200 kph in horizontal flight, and it can climb to 8000 m within three minutes. I have seen a film of a '163' taking off and I thought at first it was a trick-film; as a matter of fact I saw the film in BERLIN. For taking off, this aircraft has two wheels,

a small undercarriage on which the aircraft rests; there is a skid on which it slides when it lands again. When the rocket fuze is actuated, a huge cloud of smoke comes out behind with a deafening noise, and with terrific acceleration the aircraft shoots forward, leaves the ground after a short run, jettisons the wheels undercarriage and then climbs at an almost vertical angle of about 80°, until the fighting altitude of 8000 or 9000 m, whichever is necessary, is reached - then it changes over to horizontal flight and tries to get into a favorable position for attacking the enemy aircraft. The pilot has seven minutes in which he can, so to speak, keep the throttle open, and if after several minutes he has still failed to attain a favorable position for attack, then the propellant will have been used up, there is no longer any propulsion and all there is left for him to do is to come down to earth again like a glider. Several have been shot down in these circumstances and if they weren't shot down at once, because of their excellent maneuverability, then they were shot up on the ground as soon as they had landed.

The success of this aircraft which has been employed in the LEIPZIG area since August last year, has remained negligible; the losses were terrific. It also frequently happens that these things explode or catch fire and in that case even an asbestos suit, etc, which the pilot had to wear was no protection. They were only employed as day fighters. A further development permitting a longer flying period would give us the means of waiting on the ground for the enemy, spotting him, then taking off and shooting it down within sight of the object to be protected. The aircraft cannot be maneuvered at all when it is being propelled, but once the maximum speed has slackened, it is extremely maneuverable, that's to say it is more maneuverable in ordinary gliding flight than any fighter because it is very light and its construction is extremely suited to flying tight curves.

It was then recognized in all these developments that our greatest weakness is the small number of aircraft we can send into operation. A so-called 'Fighter programme' was accordingly set in motion, which, by the stopping of production of all other aircraft, whether bombers, reconnaissance aircraft, or anything, achieved in November 1944 the production of 4000 fighters a month. A terrific number which is larger than the total production of fighters in ENGLAND and AMERICA. then came the dark side of this mass-production, and above all this production in primitive work shops under unimaginably unfavorable conditions. In September I started to re-equip the first 'Gruppen' of my 'Geschwader' and to bring up to strength and to equip the second 'Gruppe' which was already in operation against the invasion.

The 'Gruppe' were brought up to a strength of about 60 to 70 aircraft and a corresponding number of pilots, and then the re-training started.

QUESTION: To what kind of aircraft?

ANSWER: Fw 190 and Me 109. The third 'Gruppe' flew the '190'. During the re-training I lost the following: six excellent pilots killed, a large number seriously wounded, and between 40 and 50 aircraft. I can no longer remember the number exactly. Only because of technical defects! Each time a 'Gruppe' went on a so-called 'Gruppe' training flight, I had to count on probably one killed and on two, three four or five emergency landings of which a certain number of aircraft had to be written off because they were damaged. I should like to describe one sortie on which I flew in the AIX LA CHAPELLE district with the second 'Gruppe' after Christmas. I took off in bad weather - we had about 100 m (?) visibility - that's to say you could just see the limits of the airfield. Those were weather conditions in which we would never have flown in the old days. I took off with rather more than 40 aircraft, and then set off in the direction of the RUHR district. Over the RUHR district I heard someone say on the RT, presumably a young pilot: "What shall I do, what shall I do, the cockpit's on fire?" Presumably an engine was on fire. As there was dense fog down in the RUHR district, and not more than 500 m visibility, and an emergency landing was consequently impossible, and was also inadvisable after the losses we had already sustained which could have been avoided if the pilots concerned had bailed out in time I have him the order clearly and concisely: "Bail Out!" Then, of course, everyone looked to see whether he would get out, until they did see him get out. He landed all right, the aircraft was done for. These were conditions which of course did not contribute towards raising the pilots' self-confidence or strengthening their confidence in their aircraft.

I have already described the effect of the enemy air-raids on the aircraft industry, and also the effect on the fuel industry which then led in the summer and autumn of last year to an acute petrol shortage. I will touch briefly on the effect on communications centers.

The bottle-neck industries which were attacked by the enemy, such as the ball-bearing industry for example, resulted for instance in the latest engine produced by DAIMLER BENZ, the 'DB 603', having sleeve bearings for its crankshaft instead of ball-bearings which were no longer obtainable; these sleeve-bearings are a type of bearing which is quite useful for reasonable peacetime use by suitably trained personnel, but is, however, not as reliable as a ball-bearing, and it has recently led to an extraordinary amount of engine trouble.

In view of the whole situation, it was fairly clear to us airmen what course the