

The Danube. Already a hundred years ago the water power of these rivers supplied the energy for industrial settlements making this area one of Austria's largest industrial centers. Already in the first World War Wiener Neustadt had the largest aircraft factory in the Austrian-Hungarian Empire. The famous Albatross DIII Fighters of First World War were built there.

When Germany occupied Austria on the 12th of March 1938 one of the first orders Hitler gave concerned the production facilities in this area. Hitler commanded that all available production facilities in the Vienna area switch to war material production. The largest project was the aircraft production facility in Wiener Neustadt. Within one year 20,000 workers built the largest fighter production factory in all of Germany. Already on the 27th March 1938 General Feldmarschall Goring visited

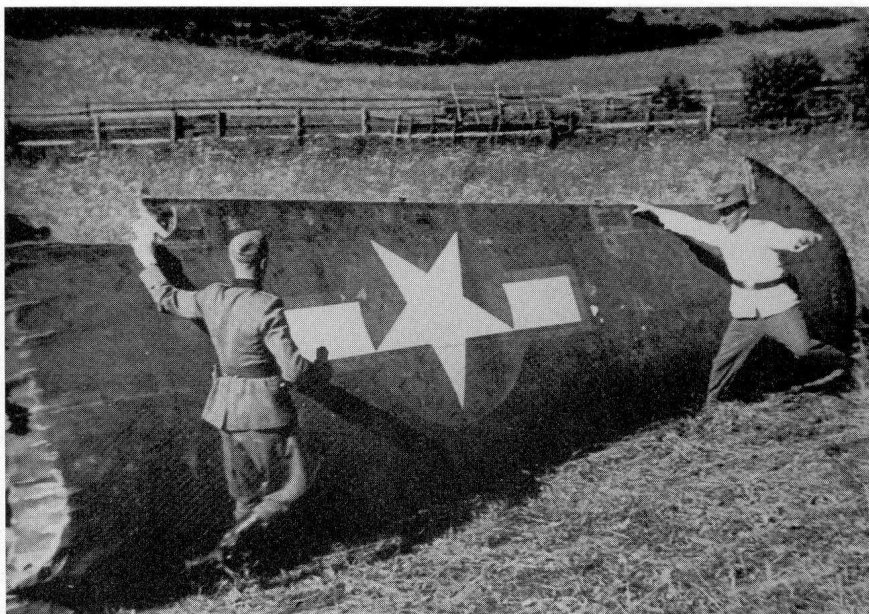
Wiener Neustadt and commanded first priority for all related activities. So at the end of March 1939 the first Me 109 E fighter left the production line and by the end of this year 119 fighters were produced in plant I and II. From 1941 on the Vienna area was one of Germany's most important war material production centers.

Let me show you a short list: In the War Material Production Center Vienna Area, Guns or parts of guns were produced in eight factories, tanks and parts of tanks were produced in four factories, engines for tanks in two factories, Me 109 were manufactured in two plants in Wiener Neustadt and in one factory in Fischamend which was called plant three.

After decentralization of production in 1943 aircraft were also produced in Bad Voslau and Zwolfaxing.

In five oil refineries; Floridsdorf, Kagran, Korneuburg, Schwechat and Vosen-dorf/Atzersdorf gasoline was produced. In the so-called oil harbor of Lobau, the oil

from Ploesti, Romania was received, stored, processed and distributed. In addition to that, there was also the refinery at Moosbierbaum thirty kilometers west of Vienna. In Wiener Neudorf a huge Mercedes production facility for aircraft engines was built. But in June 1944 it was destroyed without having produced a single engine. Finally, I should also mention the nine air fields that were set up



*Left outer wing panel of a B-24 inspected by German troopers. It was later sent on to the aluminum smelters to be reused in building German fighter planes.*

in the Vienna area.

To protect all of this, a ring of flak batteries was drawn around Vienna. Many of those batteries were moved to Russia at the beginning of the Russian campaign. But already in the spring of 1943 three flak rings were established around Vienna and in the early summer of the same year the batteries south of Vienna were reinforced. The positions were furnished with two or three batteries and the batteries themselves were increased from four to six guns each. It was only after this point that the Flak batteries in Wiener Neustadt were set up. There was no fighter defense of the Vienna area.

Although increased activities of allied recon planes were reported from spring of 1943 on, air attacks of US bombers were believed to be impossible. The severe losses of the US bombers at Ploesti supported the opinion of the German air force commanders that there would be no air attacks in the near future in the Vienna area.

Then, during the noon hour of the 13

August 1943 suddenly 61 B-24's approached and bombed Wiener Neustadt heavily and the illusion of the safety of Austria's air space was destroyed. Production was cut down by a third. None of the attacking bombers were shot down. Only one B24 had to land in Switzerland but this was due to a manufacturing flaw. The approaching bomber formation had only been recognized over the lake Balaton which is only about 24 (twenty four) minutes flying distance away from the target Wiener Neustadt. Only then a hectic reinforcement of the air defense and the aircraft reporting service began.

On the 31st of August the Luftwaffe moved two fighter groups of the Jagdgeschwader (JG) II/27 equipped with Me 109 to Fels, Wagram, and one group to Gotzendorf. Those three groups and the strengthened flak around Wiener Neustadt were able

to cause severe damage to the US bombers.

During the next attacks on the 1st of October and 2nd of November 1943 there was a winter break for the Vienna area after the raids in the fall of 1943, the Wiener Neustadt defense forces were massively strengthened. This should explain how at beginning of May 1944 Wiener Neustadt had 18 flak batteries with 94 guns, 64 guns 8.8 mm, 22 guns 10.5 mm and, 8 guns 12.8 cm railroad flak. The three flak rings around Vienna consisted of fifty four heavy flak batteries with 324 guns, 20 ea. 12.8 mm guns, 56 ea. 10.5 mm guns, 248 ea. 8.8 cm guns. 16 ea. guns with 12.8 cm were placed on the two recently finished flak towers in Vienna. The flak towers would defend the center of the city.

To fulfill the increased need for operational personnel for these flak batteries at the beginning of 1943 school children of the birth years 1926 and 1927, sixteen and seventeen year old boys, were trained for