

were the engine factories at Magdeburg, the engine factories at Cassel, the aircraft factories at Posnan, at Sorau in Silesia, everywhere and it was really remarkable with what spirit and energy the industry and our workers succeeded in the shortest possible time at Augsburg for example, from that completely ruined and oft bombed factory they reached not only the equal production figure but an even higher one within fourteen days; they hadn't a roof over their heads, either.

You met with the same picture practically everywhere. Despite that however, we were faced with the necessity of splitting up and dispersing the whole aircraft industry. Small workshops were set up in villages, engines were mounted there; one workshop produced the rudder, the second produced the elevator, the third the fuselage end, etc., etc., and in the fifth or sixth the whole thing was assembled. It was a sisyphian task, which had now become necessary. When the enemy air forces realized that they couldn't completely destroy the aircraft industry, they switched over to smashing our fuel industry. We have learned in the meantime, with what success.

We flyers had one ray of hope in that situation and that was the new jet fighter the Me 262. The Me 262, armed with four cannon 108, caliber 3 cm, is the first combustion turbine aircraft to be used operationally. First an explanation of the superficial details; a low decker with extremely thin wing profile, with a wonderful aerodynamic rounded shape and a so called tri-cycle undercarriage. The two wheels, just like in ordinary aircraft, fold inwards, but the third wheel, which is about at the nose is drawn backwards into the fuselage. Now, as far as I'm able, just a short description of the combustion turbine. The principle is as follows: air is sucked in front through the revolution of the turbine, which is first started up with a small two stroke engine.

This sucked in air then passes into a combustion chamber after it has been compressed before induction by compressors and there it is mixed with a substance similar to Diesel oil it can also be crude oil and this mixture is then ignited and explodes and it then propels the turbine, which is at the back, and the exhaust comes out at the back. With the high RPM attained by the turbine over 6000 RPM the thing works out as follows: air is sucked in front, the aircraft literally sucks its way forward. In other words a suction and pressure effect with the pressure effect considerably greater than the suction effect of course.

The normal cruising speed of this type of aircraft is over 800 kph. When one thinks that the highest speed of the most modern fighters is 600 kph one can realize how superior this aircraft is, as regards speed to all other aircraft so far used operationally. The disadvantage of this aircraft firstly, it is difficult to move on the ground and for this reason has to be towed by tractors or MC trac-

tors or similar things which are capable of pulling the aircraft. It weighs about six tons. For just taxiing once around the airfield one uses about half the amount of petrol which in flight is sufficient for one and half to two hours of flying time, according to the height. The aircraft is simply wonderful from the point of view of flying.

Of course with that speed, the takeoff presents difficulties, as does the landing, because it needs a very long run. So we put all our hopes on this type of aircraft and kept hoping that when it went into operation it would finally turn the scales of the air war again. As luck would have it, my 'Gruppe' was chosen to be retrained on to 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 retraining and some of the pilots were already accustomed to this pattern of aircraft, and others were still retraining, 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 liters of fuel to be able to fly for two hours; that's to say about twice as much as an ordinary twin engine 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 bombsight 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



*A gaggle of Me 110s peels off for an attack against Allied forces.*