

Archaeology of Conflicts II

Pavel Drnovský – Petr Hejhal – Ladislav Rytíř (eds.)



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Archaeology of the Air War 1939–45. Documentation of Messerschmitt Me 262 crashes in Bohemia

Jan Vladař

Abstract: *At the end of World War II, German jet fighters Messerschmitt Me 262 were the main adversaries of the US Air Force, and their destruction became a primary task. In April 1945 the rest of the Me 262 units retreated to airbases in Bohemia. There took place the training, production and refitting of new machines. Therefore, between April 16–19, 1945, American attacks targeted bases in Bohemia. The Americans reported about 20 Me 262s shot down, but real German losses are unknown and the data can be supplemented by confronting local historical sources and crashsites documenting. Until now 9 crashsites were rediscovered and verified in the field by surface survey. In the future, field research promises to reveal further details about the exact equipment of the crashed planes (armament, electronic equipment, manufacturer, camouflage) as well as about the former ground facilities (repair facilities, airbases, armament and fuel suppliers, ground radar and electronic guidance stations).*

Keywords: Czech Republic – Praha – Second World War – Air War 1939–1945 – archeology of modernity – non-destructive research – Messerschmitt Me 262

Air war added another dimension to combat operations. Air raids and fighter encounters appeared, as well as air transport of material or personnel. In the background of combat lines training, production, and development of new aircraft was taking place. Air battles covered large areas and the opponents kept secret the type of used planes and the identities of their crews. Therefore, in combat losses and also routine crashes of aircraft even the basic identity of the aircraft, its crew, or the circumstances of the crash were usually not discovered.

Three basic levels of sources can be used to detect and identify a crashed aircraft. Among historical sources belong mainly lists of missing aircraft and crews (for the US Air Force the so-called Missing Air Crew Reports, for the German air force so-called Verlust: Meldungen über Flugzeugverluste), followed by various combat reports, diaries, lists of the fallen... Another level is represented by local historical sources, statements of witnesses, chronicle records, contemporary reports of security and military authorities, or post-war investigations.

The last level is the discovery of the crash site and direct field research. Luckily, it is sometimes still possible to find small fragments of the aircraft, various parts, and components with descriptions and numbers on the terrain surface that allow determining the type of aircraft. Many similar finds can be already situated in private collections of metal detector seekers, who deliberately search the crash sites and sometimes manage to obtain finds with markings identifying a particular aircraft. Their activities have led to the discovery and identification of several individual cases. At the same time, there sadly are cases, when unprofessional excavations have destroyed interesting contexts that only professional archaeological research would have revealed. For the time being, it is only in partial results that the involvement of archaeology in the otherwise traditional historical study reveals another perspective

of the events, often different from the descriptive possibilities of history (Moshenska 2012, Chaters 2013, Vladař 1999, Rak 2008).

A specific sub-topic of the study of the air war over Bohemia is the presence of the German fighter Messerschmitt Me 262 “Schwalbe”. It was the first combat aircraft with jet engines. Its development began at the Messerschmitt factory in 1938, the first flight took place in July 1942, and in June 1944 the production reached about 1,500 units. The issue is specific to Bohemia. Whilst in the rest of the European theatre of war the discovery of a crashed Me 262s is a rarity, there have been several crashes in Bohemia and the story of Me 262s crossed Czech wartime history on several points.

In the introduction, the author has divided the structure of the description of individual events into three levels. The axis of the historical sources is almost entirely available for US Air Force documents. The German archive material for the reported period survives only in fragments and contains many mistakes. Locally written sources, gendarmerie reports, and chronicles are also of limited use, as they are marked by the chaos of the end of the war. The available primary documents are quoted in verbatim transcription.

Identified terrain remains, movable objects, and field relics were documented (description, identification, photographs) according to the technical and time possibilities of the author. The main terrain finding, besides the identification of the site, was the devastation by recent interventions of metal detector seekers.

Production

The first intersection of Bohemian and Me 262 history occurred after the Augsburg and Regensburg raids. Production of the Me 262 had to be dispersed to smaller plants. For example, Avia in Prague produced the nose, other structural parts were produced in Klášterec nad Ohří or Františkov in Šumava mountains, jet engines in Semily and small parts were supplied by many different workshops from all over Bohemia (Brown – Poruba – Vladař 2012).

In addition to the production of components, two final assembly lines have been set up in the Czech Republic. In the workshops of Flugzeugwerke Eger GmbH (FWE) in Cheb, the photo-reconnaissance version of the Me 262 was being assembled and damaged machines were being repaired. The first crash of the Me 262 also occurred here, when, on February 23, 1945, during a sortie of the Me 262A serial number 500103 (it is not clear if this was the reconnaissance version produced here), a very experienced test pilot from Ofw. Otto Meyer (* 17. 05. 1914, Gernsleben) died in the crash.¹

The German Air Force took over 33 modified reconnaissance machines in Cheb. NAG 6 and NAG 1 shared them. During a random overflight on April 17, 1945, with a stopover in Cheb, it was NAG 1 that encountered American fighters over the city, who reported two downed machines. Both claims by American fighters were confirmed by the German side in an intercepted radio dispatch, where they report the shooting down of Me 262A-4 W.Nr. 500540 and Me 262A-4 W.Nr. 111200, “white 5” by Stab./NAG 1 during the landing at Cheb. One pilot was saved, the pilot of “white 5” Ofw. Peter Wilke died at Cheb airfield.²

Thus, 3 crashed Me 262s are confirmed from written sources in the vicinity of Cheb. One site was identified by the author in 1991 when during the cleaning of the embankment to the hydroelectric power station in Šlapany, a fragment of a wing spar was found by workers.

¹ Bundesarchiv/Militärarchiv Freiburg, fond RL 2 III 1197_282, Meldungen über Flugzeugverluste bei den fliegenden Verbänden; Gräbersuche online [online]. Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge e.V. [Stand 28.5.2020]. <http://www.volksbund.de>

² correspondence Nick Beale, Ultra Research Group

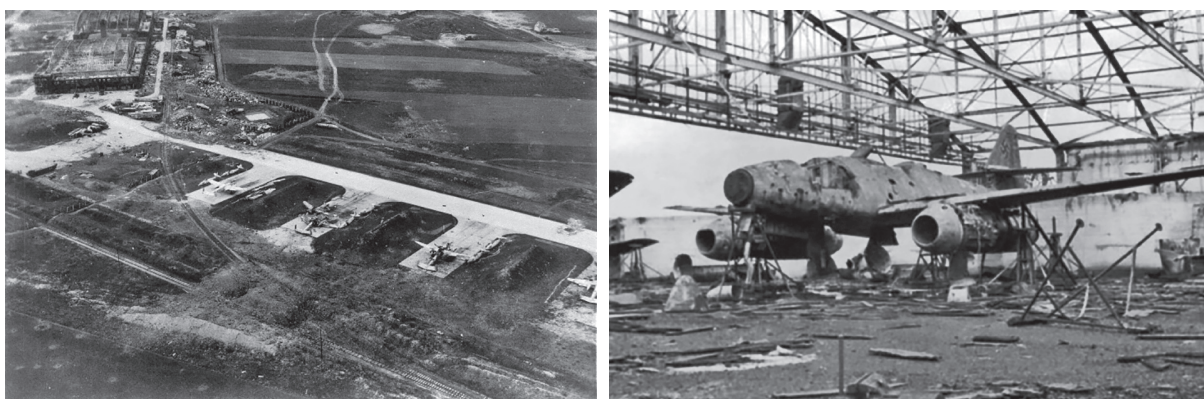


Fig. 1–2 The aircraft repair shops and factory airfield of Flugzeugwerke Eger GmbH, at the end of the war, were involved in the assembly of the Me 262. After the war, several wrecks of unfinished Me 262s remained in the destroyed factory halls and on the airfield after American air-raids.

The second assembly line had been set at the airport in České Budějovice at the company Leichtbau GmbH (LBB). In a small shed on the edge of the airfield, new Me 262s were being assembled from imported parts. In total, up to 50 were assembled, with only a few machines documented in service, mainly with units in Prague. There were also a few crashes during sorties of the new machines. The first one on February 17, 1945, is mentioned only in local records, the machine was supposed to crash



Fig. 3–4 The first casualty of the Me 262 type was Ofw. Otto Meyer. His grave is in the German War Cemetery in Mariánské Lázně. His crash site was found during the war but remains unknown now.



Fig. 5–6 During a test flight of Me 262 at the airport in České Budějovice, Ofw. Hans Voss crashed fatally. The crash site is unknown, but one crash site has been identified in the field near the airport. However, no document linking the two events has been found yet.

near the Homole settlement, but the pilot was unharmed. The next crash occurred on March 25, 1945, when Ofw. Hans Voss (* 14. 7. 1916, Melsdorf).³

Near the airfield, amateur researchers managed to find small metal fragments in the woods, pointing to the crash site. However, a closer identification or even a connection of the find with the mentioned crash of the Me 262 is not possible anymore.

III. Gruppe Kampfgeschwader (Jagd) 6

The history of the Me 262 crossed with the Czech territory for the second time in the movement of IX. Fliegerkorps. Originally, the IX. Fliegerkorps were the backbone of the German bomber air force, but gradually almost disappeared under the onslaught of enemy air superiority. Its last remnants were withdrawn from combat in September 1944 and tasked with rearmament to fighters. The main part of IX. Fliegerkorps was Kampfgeschwader 6, newly added in the name by “(Jagd)” (fighter), subordinate I. Gruppe was placed at air base Prague-Kbely, II. Gruppe to Klecany and III. Gruppe to Prague-Ruzyně. It was at Ruzyně that III./KG(J) 6, consisting of the 7. – 9. Staffel was to be rearmed with Me 262s. It received its first training machines as early as January 1945, but the training did not proceed as planned. Scraps of documents show that by March 1945, 7 of 13 delivered machines had been destroyed (Brown – Janda – Poruba – Vladař 2010). There is no support for the losses during training in local sources, apart from one gendarmerie report from Chýně, a small village close to Ruzyně base, mentioning without detail a patrol at the crashed aircraft on March 19, 1945.⁴

³ Bundesarchiv/Militärarchiv Freiburg, fond RL 2 III 1197_282, Meldungen über Flugzeugverluste bei den fliegenden Verbänden; correspondence Rolf Dornbusch, Melsdorf

⁴ SOA Praha, fond Sbirka t.zv. četnických knih ze Středočeského kraje, inv.č. 1264, Staniční služební kniha Hostivice, okres Kladno, od 19. července 1944 (after delimitation SOKA Kladno)

Koštov, Ústí nad Labem district

Rarely, the crash on April 2, 1945, is recorded in local documents and can be safely linked to field observations. On this day at 17.45 hours Uffz. Günter Heinz Blüthchen (* 29. 5. 1923, Berlin) fatally crashed. The plane was destroyed and the pilot's body was completely torn apart. Nevertheless, a police report, probably based on personal documents found on the airman, records his name and also his affiliation to "7. Kampfgeschwader 6", meaning 7. Staffel, abbreviated to 7./KG (J) 6. An eyewitness to the crash was the locksmith apprentice Gerhard Rziha from Trmice "It could have been around 5.30 pm. . . in Koštov I heard a whizzing above me, I looked up the mountain and saw a plane flying from Žandov, which passed me at about 500 meters, then banked, and when it passed the Devil's stone it must have exploded in the air and crashed. I only heard a bang. . . Since I was supposed to be at my grandparents' house at 6 pm, I continued my way. It was only after I told my grandparents about the accident that I was able to go to the crash site. In the meantime, the forester Jagel from Milbohov had already arrived there and he did not let us go there. . ." he testified on April 6, 1945, to the police report.⁵

Amateur researchers found the wreckage of the crashed plane on an inaccessible hillside above the right bank of the Bílina River, northwest of the village of Stebno. The site is located on the edge of the wooded hillside Stadické srázy, just below the edge, where the hillside becomes a deforested plateau rising gently to the east. It partly extends into the valley between the Jizerský vrch 454 m and the more southerly point 426 m. The site contained several metal fragments, partly secondary concentrated in small piles. No impact crater or other terrain anomalies related to the crash were observed in the field. On the steep hillside, it was not possible to determine the full extent of the debris, according to observations, it extended down the slope in a strip 30 m wide and 200 m long, apparently caused by spontaneous sliding of fragments down the slope. The wreckage found was clearly from a Messerschmitt Me 262 aircraft, with the characteristic Jumo 004 engine blades and fragments of the structure, including the preserved camouflage paint.



Fig. 7–8 The wooded hillsides of the Stadické srázy above the Bílina River hide the best-preserved site of the Me 262 crash. It was a training flight of the Me 262 of III./KG(J) 6 from Prague-Ruzyně air base. Uffz. Günter Heinz Blüthchen was killed.

Combat operations, April 1945

Despite the unfinished training III./KG (J) 6 was declared combat capable in mid-April 1945. It was included among other combat units, which had just withdrawn to Ruzyně. After 14 days of bad weather,

⁵ SOA Litoměřice, fond Úřad vládního presidenta Ústí nad Labem 1938–1945, odd. a decentrát IB GEND. spis bez označení

an American aerial reconnaissance found at least 61 Me 262s at Ruzyně base on April 16, 1945. About 6 of them belonged to the home III./KG(J) 6, another 25 to KG(J) 54, and the remaining to JG 7. The vast majority of all operational Me 262s were concentrated at the Ruzyně base. During many encounters with the American Air Force between 16–25 April 1945, 18 other cases of Me 262 crashes can be found with certainty in the field and documents (Rajlich 1997, Foud – Krátký – Vladař 1997).

April 16, 1945

On the afternoon of April 16, 1945, the main unit of the US Air Force the 8th Air Force (AF) focused on communications targets in southern Bavaria. Fighter escorts reported sighting about a dozen Me 262s, but no engagement occurred. Over nine hundred fighters flew in support of the bombers, making the most extensive attack against enemy airfields. According to the American side, some 1.100 enemy aircraft were destroyed or damaged at bases in Bavaria and Bohemia. The airfields around Prague were targeted by the 4th, 78th, and 339th Fighter Group (FG), who lost 9 aircraft over Prague. Three of their pilots lost their lives, the rest bailed out and rescued or made emergency landings.

Independently of the massive operation of 8th AF, fighter-bombers of 9th AF also penetrated the territory over Bohemia. Subordinate XIX. Tactical Air Command (TAC), supporting ground troops approaching the Czech border, sent 371st FG over northern Bohemia and 367th FG focused on the Mariánské Lázně airfield. 368th FG hit the deepest over central Bohemia. Its three subordinates 395th, 396th and 397th Squadron conducted nine missions during the day.

Řeporyje, Prague district

One of the missions, defined by the order to the “*Marienberg-Prague*” (the locality of Marienberg appears in other American reports, the context suggests that it is a confusion and corruption of the German name Marienbad – Mariánské Lázně) area, took place between 12:05 and 15:22. Twelve P-47 Thunderbolts from 397th Squadron hit two locomotives, damaged 9 cars, and destroyed 18 vehicles. Around 14:30 their pilots spotted 12 enemy units Me 262s taking off from the airfield at coordinates L-6689 (probably Prague-Ruzyně). During their pursuit 1./Lt. Vernon O. Fein and 1./Lt. Henry A. Yandel shot down one Me 262 each. Also, the pilots of the other twelve Thunderbolts of 396th Squadron observed two Me 262s west of Prague and at 14 hours 1./Lt. James S. Mitchell shot down one Me 262 near Rakovník (coordinates L-2884). In addition to this, they also reported the destruction of 6 and damage of two other vehicles (Olynk 1989).⁶

Incomplete and inaccurate data from the German Air Force shows for April 16, 1945, without further details, a single loss of Me 262 by 1. Staffel Jagdgeschwader 7. Pilot Uffz. Harald König bailed out and was rescued. At the same time, however, he is listed in the 1. Staffel casualty list as early as April 10, 1945. Uffz. Harald König was an experienced fighter pilot and participated in combat as a member of II./JG 3 before its renaming to I./JG 7 (1.–3. Staffel) in November 1944 (Boehme 1983, Stemmer 2003).

Local sources confirm the American claims in one case, the crash of the Me 262 in Řeporyje near Prague. The circumstances surprisingly align with the German data. The chronicle of the village of Řeporyje records: “...a German turbine was shot down over the village, the pilot jumped in the former

⁶ Air Force Historical Research Centre, Maxwell, Alabama, USA, fond Ninth Air Force Summary of Operations, No. 106 16.April 1945



Fig. 9–10 A period photograph of smoke rising above a crashed Me 262 in the Daleje valley near Řeporyje. The entrance gate at the family house was restored after the war at the site of the Me 262 crash on April 16, 1945 (photo 2009).

brickyard near the railway barriers. The plane crashed on the road to the mill in front of the house of Mr. Vil. Staško no. 498, the plane broke the fence with masonry and destroyed the roof by fire.”⁷ The term “turbine” was used by the locals to refer Messerschmitt Me 262. The documents of the Řeporyje gendarmerie station completely omit the event, as the gendarmes were dispatched to a simultaneous case of an American fighter crash near village Chýnice.⁸

As the chronicle account clearly shows, the German plane crashed and burned between houses and the road to Truneček’s mill in the valley of the Dalej brook southeast of Řeporyje. The damage from the crash and subsequent fire were repaired immediately and were not apparent during the 2009 survey of the site. In an interview with the author, the current owner of property no. 498 recalled that perhaps there were still charred beams in the roof truss of the house.

April 17, 1945

On the following day, April 17, 1945, the encounters with the Me 262 intensified. The US Air Force began operations in full force, fighter-bombers of the 9th AF operated over northwest Bohemia, 15th AF fighters from Italy intervened over southern Bohemia, and the main force of 8th AF sent a thousand

⁷ Úřad městské části Praha-Řeporyje, kronika obce

⁸ SOA Praha, fond Sbírka t.zv. četnických knih ze Středočeského kraje, inv.č. 1309, Staniční služební kniha Řeporyje 1.1.1945–25.9.1947

bombers with eight hundred fighters over Dresden, Ústí nad Labem and the fuel depots at Hněvice near Roudnice nad Labem. Other units attacked railway stations in Beroun, Kladno, and Sokolov. Antiaircraft artillery and fighter attacks of Me 262 from Ruzyně base caused the loss of eight bombers, three of which crashed in Bohemia. At the same time, American fighters targeted German airfields, including Prague, České Budějovice, Plzeň, Klatovy and Cheb. In total, they destroyed and damaged over 200 German aircraft on the ground. Again, antiaircraft artillery of the bases took a heavy toll when sixteen P-51 Mustangs were shot down. Three of them crashed in Bohemia, two pilots were killed, and one bailed out and was saved. Four other planes had to make emergency landings and their pilots were captured.

During the fighting with the Me 262, the American fighter pilots claimed a total of 7 certain kills, 4 probable, and another 11 enemy planes damaged. Over Bohemia, they list 4 planes shot down and one damaged. Local sources agree with the American data, documented are five Me 262 shot down and one emergency landing. In the case of three sites, the impact of the Me 262 can also be confirmed by field research.

Nesvačily, Beroun district

One of the fighter units protecting the bombers during the attack on Dresden was 364th FG. Directly over the target at 14:00 hours, 17 Mustangs from its 383rd Squadron repelled a group of Me 262s attacking the bombers and then pursued the enemy group over Prague. Here, between 14:30 – 14:50 hours, a five-man flight encountered a lone Me 262. *“Jet made a 180-degree turn to the left. Capt. Orndorff fired at 600 yards and observed no hits. Jet pulled up to the left and bailed out. The jet was smoking and blew up shortly after the pilot bailed out.”*⁹

Successful actor Capt. Roy W. Orndorff only generally locates the shoot-down with the Czech “Praha”, but with caution, the circumstances perhaps allow his claim to be identified with the crash of the Me 262 near the village of Nesvačily in the Beroun district. The crash of the aircraft was investigated by Czech gendarmes from the Liteň, and the result of their investigation is contained in a unique document in the German language *“Summary Report about Air Attacks on April 17, 1945, for the Gendarmerie Headquarter of Beroun district”*. The document mentions in detail: *“... a German plane White 1 crashed and burned near Liteň. The crew Feldwebel Willi Schaffer bailed out unharmed at the SS camp in Skuhrov.”*¹⁰

During the collection of historical material Air War on the territory of Czechoslovakia for the Headquarters of the Ministry of National Defence in 1947 the Command of the SNB station Liteň made another report with several details: *“On April 17, 1945, at 14:27, close to the village Liteň, district Beroun, a fight took place at a considerable height between a formation of American bomber planes and one German turbine plane. The German plane was set on fire by gunfire and fell just outside the borders of the municipality of Liteň, on the municipality of Nesvačily, district Hořovice, SNB station Osov, where it remained until the coup and further on. The pilot, a German Feldwebel, jumped out and saved himself by parachute. He parachuted close to the village Skuhrov. While parachuting down, he was fired at with machine guns from the SS weapons depot in Skuhrov, believing him to be a foreign airman. The airman was not injured. American planes circled the downed airman and around the SS depot, then took off and bombed Beroun.”*¹¹

⁹ Air Force Historical Research Centre, Maxwell, Alabama, USA, Mission Combat Report 364 FG 17 April 1945 via LTC James E. McDonough, United States Army, Office of the Secretary of Defense, Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office

¹⁰ Národní archiv Praha, fond Zemské četnické velitelství Praha, kart.č. 902, došlý spis Souhrnné hlášení o leteckých útocích dne 17.dubna 1945 okresního četnického velitelství Beroun

¹¹ Vojenský ústřední archiv Praha, fond: Letecká válka nad územím Československa 1939–45, kart. č. 5 / složka č. 188 – Velitelství stanice SNB Liteň, okr. Beroun 4.6.1947 (the document is currently missing)

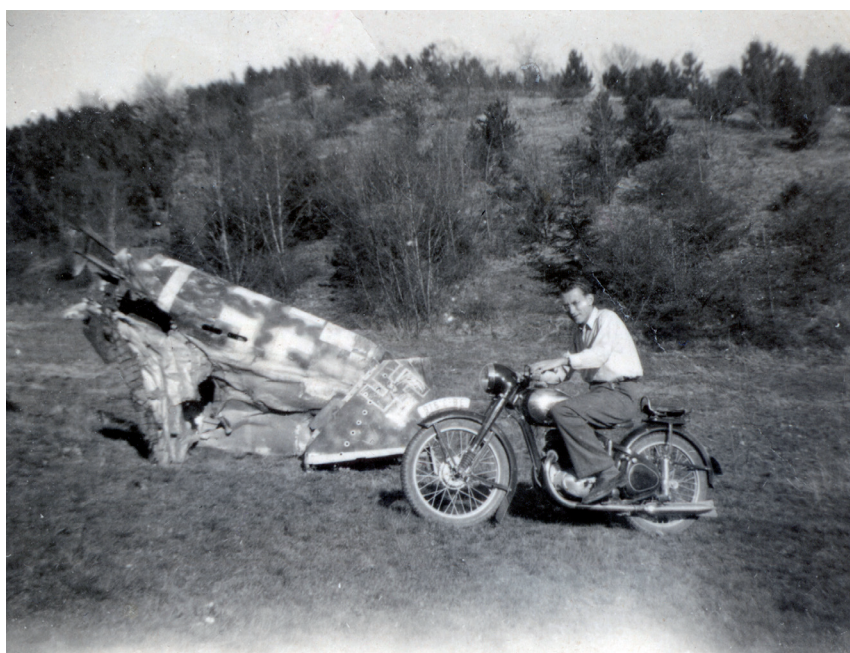


Fig. 11 A period photograph from the summer of 1946 shows the destroyed rear of a Me 262 under a forest near Nesvačily. The marking “white 1” and the blue and white identification checkerboard KG(J) 54 are visible.

The dogfight of planes and the crash itself was observed by future military aviator Josef Vitásek (* 1932): *“In the spring of 1945, instead of going to school, we had to go to the forest to help the owners of Liteň Castle. One day I was just coming out of the woods with a friend after work, hoes over my shoulder, and we heard machine gun fire. We had just seen a duel of planes high in the sky, one of them flashed, smoke started coming out and the pilot jumped out with his parachute. The plane left smoke behind it and crashed on the edge of the hill above the village from where a cloud of smoke rolled out. The pilot on the parachute was carried by the strong wind towards us, when he was above the village the Germans from the malt house started to shoot at him with a machine gun, and finally, he landed a short distance from us, the canopy of his parachute still inflated and blew him down among the oaks in the woods about 100m from us. In the meantime, the German soldiers from the village with the dogs and the machine gun were rushing enthusiastically to the spot, by then the airman was yelling loudly, in German, and the soldiers quickly slowed down and put the dog on a leash. They packed up their parachute and the airman was still cursing at them loudly.”*¹²

The documents from the German side do not mention the event or the pilot’s name, but the details are uniquely provided by an amateur photograph taken by Josef Votík after the war in the summer of 1946. It shows the wreckage of the rear part of the Me 262 pulled from the forest to the edge of a field near Nesvačily. The marking “white 1” recorded by the gendarmes is visible, but also the blue and white checkerboard marking the Kampfgeschwader (Jagd) 54 unit.

The crash site was found easily thanks to the memories of the witnesses. It is located at the northern end of the commune Nesvačily, east of the village of Vinařice, below the Šamor hill (481 m) in the gorge with the local name Na mramorech (On Marbles), which flows into the basin of the Vodice stream. During a survey of the wooded site in March 2009, a large extent of scattered small metal fragments was found throughout the width of the gorge with no obvious impact-induced terrain anomalies. The scattering of debris gives the impression of a flat impact at the top of the chute, shattering the engines and forward fuselage and sliding the debris down the slope of the chute for about 300 m to the lower edge of the forest.

¹² author’s interview with Josef Vitásek, May 3, 2009



Fig. 12–13 Eyewitness Josef Vitásek points to the saddle below the Šamor hill where the Me 262 crashed during the war. The author with a steel beam of the engine cowling found at the crash site after the war.

Štáhlavice, Plzeň-south district

As part of the bomber escort 55 Mustangs of 339th FG also made it over Bohemia. They ended the direct escort at 14.00 over Selbitz (in original Selbat) and continued to operate divided by individual flight. The summary report states: *“In the air, one Flight attacked a Me 262 which was first seen coming from the direction of Prague. It was chased and destroyed SE of Rokycany at 15:00 hrs, 2.000 feet. . . Claim: One Me 262 destroyed by Lt. Campbell.”*

Details were also described for the record by the actor, the last member of Blue Flight 503rd “Beefsteak” Squadron 1./Lt. John C. Campbell flying with P-51 Mustang No. 44-72333 designation D7-U. *“I was flying Beefsteak Blue #3 at 2.000 feet and had no wingmen when I called in two jets which dived by at 90 degrees to our course. We chased them, but they were gradually moving away from us and we were about to end the chase when another Me 262 flew in front of us from the left in a flat turn. Me 262 crossed in front of us in a shallow turn to port. I followed Lt. Ferrell and his wingman as they broke to cut him off, Lt. Ferrell fired in a steep turn and overshot the jet. I pulled six Gs and followed the 262 at about 325 IAS as he dived for the deck. I opened fire and hit his left jet engine and kept firing short bursts while he made a 90-degree turn to the right closing all the time. The blow job leveled off at 200 feet and I knocked pieces off his left wing, corrected my fire to hit the fuselage, and the pilot bailed out. I may have hit the pilot because his chute did not open, the jet half rolled in and exploded in a clearing in some woods. I claim one Me 262 destroyed.”*¹³

Thanks to the unusually precise location “SE of Rokycany”, the case can be identified with the crash of the Me 262 near the village of Štáhlavice. Frantisek Uher, a teacher, and chronicler in nearby Nezvěstice wrote: *“The plane was shot down: On the afternoon of April 17, a German aviator was flying over Štáhlavice on a new aluminum fighter. The American pilots spotted the plane and started to combat it. They attacked it from two sides to prevent it from escaping. The pilot jumped but was killed in the crash. He fell to the ground at the Štáhlavice station. The pilotless plane was still flying through the forest and then crashed into a clearing on the right side of the road leading to Milínov. The wreckage of the plane has long been visited by the curious. After that, thick smoke rolled out of the forest near Hájek. The forest was on fire. Our citizens and firemen were called to go to extinguish the fire.”*¹⁴

¹³ Air Force Historical Research Centre, Maxwell, Alabama, USA, Micro AO 8/6 FRAME 2149, 503 FS 339 FG Mission No. 260, Mission Summary Report 17 April 1945, also includes a separate Encounter report 1st Lt. John C. Campbell

¹⁴ Obecní úřad Nezvěstice, Pamětní kniha obce Nezvěstice, II. díl



Fig. 14–15 Photocopter footage shows a Me 262 falling into the woods above the railway station of Štáhlavice on April 17, 1945. The shot down was achieved by 1./Lt. John C. Campbell, a member of Blue Flight 503rd “Beefsteak” Squadron 339th FG in a P-51 Mustang No. 44-72333 designated D7-U.

The commander of the SNB station in Nezvěstice, Chief Constable Jílek, wrote the following on the form for collecting historical material *The Air War on the Territory of Czechoslovakia*, for the Main Staff of the Ministry of National Defence in 1947: “On April 17, 1945, an air battle took place over the local area, during which American depth planes shot down one German turbine-jet plane over the area of the village of Štáhlavice.”¹⁵

Other details, in a very naturalistic and peculiar language, were also written down by the chronicler of Štáhlavice, František Hofman: “On the 17th (April 1945) there was an air battle over our village, a German plane was shot down. The pilot was dead, both legs broken, his back broken, one arm broken, his face contorted. His brain was lying 10 feet away. The pilot’s name was Fähnrich Fric Namyslach, Vienna. He was found in Prantě in the blacksmith’s field near Lom, the plane crashed in the woods near the Milínov road. The plane had 2 engines that burned up. The plane got a gas explosion and was blown into hundreds of pieces. The pilot was taken to Štáhlavice to the cemetery where the German soldiers buried him.”¹⁶

The book of those buried in the cemetery in Štáhlavice records the details of the burial, which took place on April 21, 1945. According to the entry, the buried person was Fähnrich (unterofficer rank) Fritz Namyslach, born May 26, 1922.¹⁷

The author was able to obtain further details only recently in the archives of the German Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge e.V. In its records, in December 1944, Fritz Namyslack (*16. 5. 1922, Gross Salze) is listed as a member of the 7. Staffel Kampfgeschwader 54.¹⁸

The recollections of residents complete the course of the clash. Three American Mustangs pursued the Me 262 from Hrádek near Rokycany, and during the overflight of the Kozel forest, burning fuel began to leak from the damaged machine, setting the forest on fire in several places. The aircraft flew over the valley of the Kornatice brook and the railway line at a low altitude and crashed into a low spruce forest on the forest road to Milínov. The pilot, with his parachute unopened, landed in the meadow near the railway station. The testimony of the locals who spent the wartime period in their childhood cabins in the Kornatice Brook valley for fear of air raids on towns guided the author to the location of

¹⁵ Vojenský ústřední archiv Praha, fond: Letecká válka nad územím Československa 1939–45, kart. č. 8 / složka Nezvěstice, spis č.j. 4/47

¹⁶ Soupis kronik, Státní okresní archiv Plzeň-jih v Blovicích [online]. Pamětní kniha obce Štáhlavic [Stand 28.10.2021]. <http://www.portafontium.eu>

¹⁷ Obecní úřad Štáhlavice, matrika, Kniha pohřbených 1945, nestránkováno

¹⁸ Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge e.V.



Fig. 16 Fhr. Fritz Namyslach was buried on April 21, 1945, in grave No. 79 in Section II of the new cemetery in Štáhlavy. His burial place was declared a war grave and is still maintained.

the crash in August 1990. The spruce forest recalled by the witnesses was already a mature forest, in which two grooves from the plane's flat impact were found about 10 m apart, the distance between them corresponding to the two engines of the Me 262. At the same time, recent excavations were also evident, confirmed by another researcher whom the author met by chance on site. In his home collection, there were already several recognizable finds such as parts of a Rheinmetall-Borsig MK 108 cannon of 30 mm caliber or a cylinder from a Riedel starter motorcycle. In the course of the following 30 years, the natural archaeologization of the site as well as further, deliberate interventions could be observed. The site was most severely affected by forestry logging in 2009, with machinery completely wiping away the uneven terrain left by the impact of the aircraft, but at the same time clearing the wider area revealed other findings. At a distance of about 100 m in the extension of the two identified furrows, the forest exploitation revealed another concentration of finds. Among them were several shrapnels from 30 mm shells for the MK 108 nose guns, apparently indicating the impact site of the aircraft's nose.

Dubí, Teplice district

As part of the bomber task force attacking Ústí nad Labem, flew also 64 Mustang of 357th FG. In the area between Initial Point (east of Žatec) approached the formation 7 Me 262s. *"7 ME 262s encountered and prevented from reaching bombers between I/P and target, individually and one flight of four. All evaded except one NE of Prague 6,000 ft. 1500. The E/A when intercepted cut its power and tightened its turn and F/O Steiger did a wing over to get on his tail, closed up, got strikes all over the A/C, which fell off on its left wing and went straight into the ground."* F/O James A. Steiger himself stated for the record: *"I was flying Greenhouse Blue Four when we sighted an ME 262 going 180 degrees to the bomber stream. We turned into the E/A as he turned into the bombers. The flight spread out and gave chase and I was in position on the far left. The E/A flew over Prague and I passed north of the city. At this time I sighted another ME 262 at 6,000 feet going in a northerly direction east of Prague. I tried to turn into the ME 262 but he turned away from me. I then pulled up into a wingover and rolled over onto his tail. As I came closer I began firing at approximately 600 yards and continued right up till approximately 15 yards away. At this time the E/A fell off on its left wing and dove straight into the ground and exploded. I claim one ME 262 and pilot destroyed. Ammunition expended: 1200 rounds."* After evaluating the day's mission, the downed Me 262 was confirmed "NE of Prague" at 14:55 hours.¹⁹

¹⁹ Air Force Historical Research Centre, Maxwell, Alabama, USA, Supplement to 357th Fighter Group Mission Summary Report, F.O. 2007A, 17 April 1945

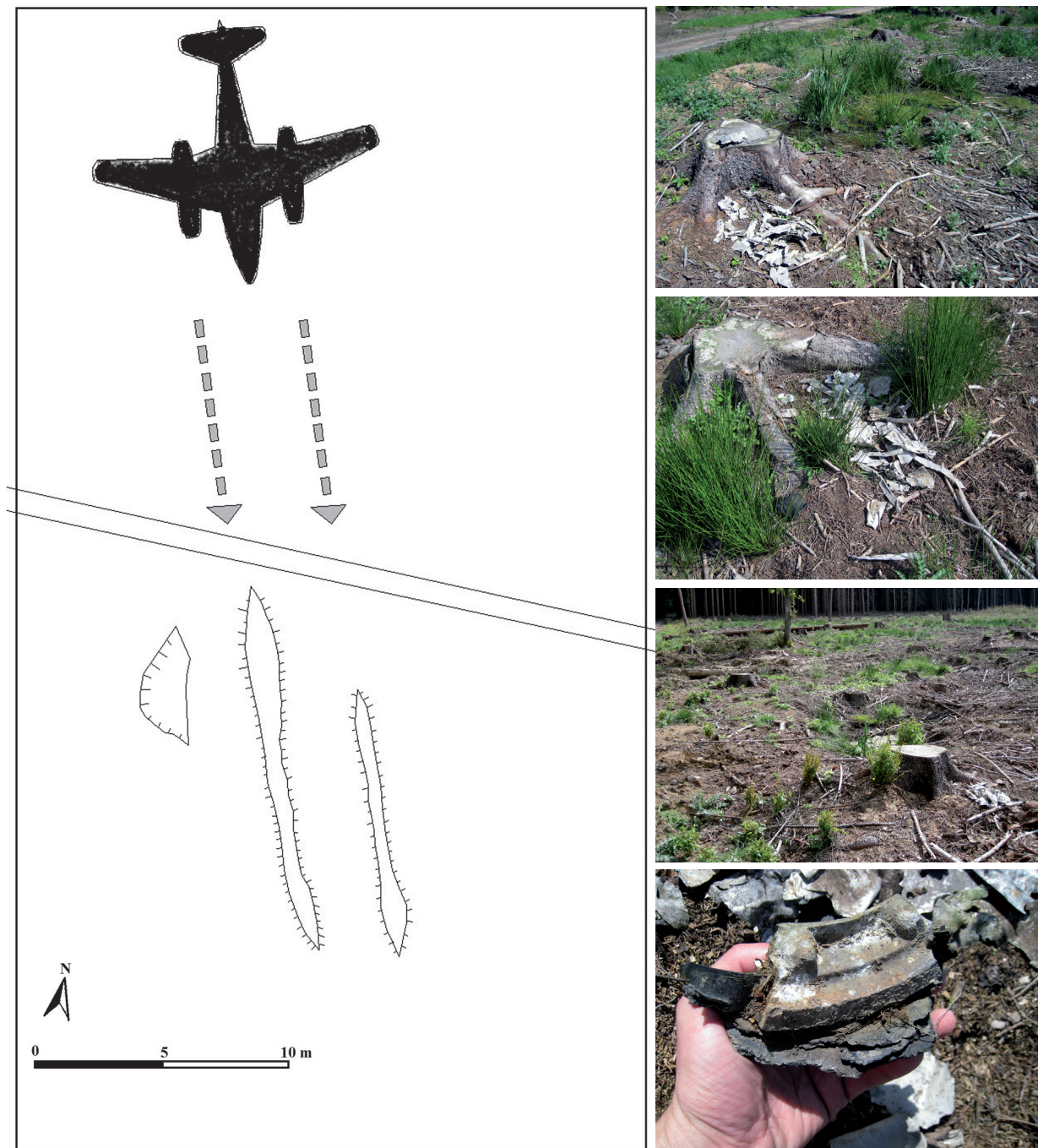


Fig. 17–21 The crash site of the Me 262 in the forest near Dubí showed only a few small metal fragments (state 2009).

The case could be quickly identified with the documented crash of the Me 262 into the fields between Radonice, Dolní Počernice, and Dehtáry, northeast of Prague, according to the circumstances described, but further details from the American report supported by local sources point to a different course.

At the time of the described attack of the Me 262 group, the 357th FGs were moving between Žatec and Ústí nad Labem. At 14:55 hours the commander of 363rd “Cement” Squadron Lt.Col. Jack W. Hayes clashed there and another Me 262 was credited to him. After evaluation, his Me 262 was awarded as damaged “SE of Brux” and F/O Steiger’s claim should be located in North Bohemia.

The aerial encounter took place near Louny. *“One hundred Anglo-American planes were flying over our region. German fighters were attacking them. We were planting potatoes in Baba and we watched the spectacle,*



Fig. 22–23 The crash site of the Me 262 in the forest near Dubí showed only a few small metal fragments (state 2009).

fascinating and horrible at the same time. It was a wonder the women didn't lose their minds, how frightened they were. We were lying in rows pressed to the ground. The machine guns roared, and we saw a plane rushing in flames down in the earth, somewhere beyond Zeměchy." The chronicler of the nearby village of Obora also recorded a similar experience: "In the noon hours... again groups of planes from the northwest swept over, suddenly German fighters appeared and so an air battle was unleashed over the countryside from Košice to Postoloprty. Six German fighters were shot down. Also over the local mill, a German fighter was attacked by a fierce attack but sought to escape and so the fight moved further west." Report of Constable Rozkoš from the SNB Headquarters in Teplice, dated June 7, 1949, states in the table: "Dubí April 17, 1945. Crash of own /German/ aircraft No. 111567 Me 262 Turb.pilot Horst Wäsche fatally wounded."²⁰

The unintentional note about the actual aircraft suggests that an older, German document, now lost, was used to compile the table. Still, the short report contains basic information that allows further details to be ascertained. The machine, fully designated Me 262A-1a serial number 111567, was first flown on March 11, 1945, by Lt. Hans Schumacher at the Brandenburg-Briest base, later apparently assigned to JG 7. Horst Wälsche as a member of I./JG 7 or Hptm. Walache of III./KG(J) 6, but neither could be verified in primary sources (O'Connell 2006, Horn 2004).

The site of the crash near the Dubí railway station near Teplice was found by amateur researchers before 1989 thanks to memories of witnesses. It is located deep in the forest between the steep, southern slopes of the Ore Mountains. The site itself, however, lies in the gently sloping spring basin of the Mstišov Brook on the western side of a small mountain ridge between 520 and 519 m above sea level, which separates the stream gorge from the parallel valley of the Bystřice River flowing through Dubí. No terrain anomalies visibly related to the impact of the aircraft were found during the 2009 survey, only a few metal fragments, probably left behind after recent excavations by metal prospectors, were scattered over a square area of about 20x20 m.

April 18, 1945

Operations on April 18, 1945, continued with attacks on the railway network. Bombers of 8. AF were assigned to Passau, Rosenheim and Traunstein stations, and in Bohemia to Kolín, Tábor and České Budějovice. However, a meteorological reconnaissance from Bohemia reported unfavorable weather,

²⁰ Vojenský ústřední archiv Praha, fond: Letecká válka nad územím Československa 1939–45, kart. č. 9 / složka Teplice

so the formation heading over southern Bohemia was called off. Only Kolín was attacked by a hundred bombers and about twenty others mistakenly bombed Plzeň.

Trnová, Prague-west district

The 357th FG was sent to patrol over the Ruzyně base. In the dogfights over the base one Me 262 was shot down for sure, the other 3 were confirmed as damaged. One attacking Mustang was lost. Two Me 262s were intercepted while taking off by the 363rd “Cement” Squadron. One escaped into the clouds, the other was encountered by Maj. Donald H. Bochkay: *“I was leading cement blue flight when we arrived in our target area at 15,000 ft. Cement white flight called in a bogie low at 11 o’clock. I recognized it as Me 262. I dropped my tanks and dove from 15,000 feet pulling up behind the Me 262. He flew into my shots at about 400 yards, and I hit his right engine and cockpit exactly. He then banked to the right in a very sharp turn, even the ribbons of vapor at the wingtips became visible. My G-meter showed a 9-G overload. As he straightened out at 7,000 feet I was 250 yards behind him going about 475 M.P.H. After further hits, parts started flying off the plane and it caught fire. I pulled off to avoid the pieces and watched the Me 262 fall apart. Its tail came off. Then it flipped over and crashed like a torch into the woods next to the river. The pilot never got out. I claim one Me 262 destroyed.”*²¹

The crash of the Me 262 into the slope above the right bank of the Vltava River near Davle is confirmed by eyewitness Bohumil Čadil: *“The air battle occurred around the end of April 1945, I was working in our restaurant “U Čadilů” and helping my father. I saw an American mustang chasing a German Messerschmitt jet fighter from Prague through the Vltava valley. The American plane was strafing the Messerschmitt and the German plane started smoking after the hit. The German pilot jumped out of his plane on a parachute and landed on the other bank of the Vltava River at “Na Volečku”. I went to a place near Trnová, where I assumed the German machine had landed. The plane landed partly in a field where the rear part of the plane was lying and on the edge of the forest where more wreckage could be seen. . . After a while, a German pilot arrived at the crash site with some escorts on a motorcycle. I saw a German lorry arriving and then I preferred to return home. . .”*²²

The concept of the summary report of the Gendarmerie Headquarters of the District Prague-country-south states: *“On April 18, 1945, at about 13:45 hours a German twin-engine aircraft crashed and burned in the area of the village of Trnová. The pilot, Lieutenant Oldřich /Ulrich/ Wöhnert, jumped out of the burning plane and sustained light injuries in the crash.”* The fate of the pilot is specified by the gendarmerie book of the station Zvole, a village on the opposite bank of the river. Constable Vl. Havelka went on patrol to the village of Oleška, where the aviator was spotted in a parachute. He secured the parachute and subsequently detained a German lieutenant who had jumped out of a burning plane above the settlement. He informed the air base in Prague-Ruzyně about the incident by telephone.²³

Lt. Ulrich Wöhnert (* 24. 10. 1914, Wolfshagen) achieved 86 aerial victories during his career with JG 54 in the battles on the Eastern Front, for which he was awarded the Knight’s Cross on December 8, 1944. He was withdrawn from combat in January 1945 for health reasons, and his combat performance in April 1945 is documented only by the above Czech gendarmerie entry.

The impact site between the villages of Trnová and Měchenice is one of the side ravines of the Vltava Valley directly above the railway bridge near Vrané nad Vltavou. It was found and explored by

²¹ Air Force Historical Research Centre, Maxwell, Alabama, USA, Supplement to 357th Fighter Group Mission Summary Report, F.O. 2017A, 18 April 1945

²² author’s interview with Bohumil Čadil, June 10, 2010

²³ SOA Praha, fond Sbirka t.zv. četnických knih ze Středočeského kraje, inv.č. 1230, Staniční služební kniha Vrané nad Vltavou 1.1.1942–22.5.1946



Fig. 24–25 The wreckage of the Me 262 on the edge of the Vltava valley near Trnová was artificially concentrated by metal detectorists in one place. Contexts revealing the dispersion and distribution of the debris have thus been lost (state 2009).

amateur researchers around 2000. During their excavations, they found small metal fragments and identifiable parts of the aircraft, cabin glazing, engine cowling plates, and several fragmented 30 mm MK 108 cannon shells. During the author's site survey in 2009, the older finds left at the site had already been artificially piled up, making it impossible to even approximately determine the original distribution of the debris, its center, or possibly the exact point of impact. At the same time, no terrain irregularities were observed to identify the impact site. The site is located on the edge of a meadow and on the steep, rocky slopes of a river valley.

April 19, 1945

On April 19, 1945, the US Air Force's engagements with the Me 262s concentrated at Prague-Ruzyně culminated, although the 8th AF deployed only six hundred bombers. In Bohemia, two hundred bombers attacked Karlovy Vary and Ústí nad Labem. Several Me 262s managed to take off from Ruzyně, and at 12:30 hours, made a concentrated attack on the bomber formation between Příbram and the Vltava River. The casualties were a formation of 30 B-17 Flying Fortress machines of 490th BG at the end of the formation. Three bombers were shot down. With no fighter escort, the defense was left to the skills of the deck gunners alone. Their success summed up to claim five certain Me 262s shot down and one probable and two damaged. Field research can document two Me 262s shot down in the battle area, and several clues point to two other cases, but they have not yet been conclusively confirmed by field findings.

Krchleby, okr. Benešov

“On April 19, 1945, afternoon a lot of Anglo-American aircraft flew in from Sedlčany and the Germans started attacking them and an air battle ensued during which several German aircraft were shot down and one burning German fighter crashed deep into Čermák's meadow ‘under the hillside’ where it plunged several meters into the ground, shattered and burned. The pilot of this plane fell to death as his parachute had not



Fig. 26–27 Uffz. Franz Josef Nenning was first buried in the garrison cemetery in Prague-Ďáblice, subsequently exhumated and transferred to Cheb for burial.



Fig. 28–29 The metal fragments found at the edge of the forest near Krchleby were probably created during the removal of debris that interfered with fieldwork. The Me 262 machine is identified by the blades of the Jumo 004 engine (state 2009).

opened and was found in the afternoon by Frant. Mařík from No. 11 at the top of Zeman's field. It was Franz Nenynk from Lingenau” the chronicle of the village of Krchleby thoroughly records (Novotný 2006).²⁴

Uffz. Franz Josef Nenning (* 20.10. 1919, Lingenau) was a member of III./KG(J) 6 in the records of the Deutsche Dienststelle, according to the identification mark number – 319-53565. He is listed as fallen “*bei Prag*”.²⁵

The crash site is located between Krchleby and Nahoruby, at the northwestern foot of a forested hill 371 m, which flows into the valley of a small watercourse above the mill on the Vlkonický brook. No terrain relics were detected by the surface survey in 2009. Small fragments were scattered over an area of about 50x50 m at the boundary between the forest and the field, probably secondary to

²⁴ Obecni úřad Krchleby, kronika obce

²⁵ Deutsche Dienststelle für die Benachrichtigung der nächsten Angehörigen von Gefallenen der ehemaligen deutschen Wehrmacht (WASSt), Berlin – personal correspondence

the removal of debris from the cultivated field to the edge of the forest. The blades of a Jumo 004 jet engine were identified among the finds. Other marked engine parts from older excavations are in a private collection.

Chotilsko, Příbram district

A similar case, which took place on the opposite, right bank of the Vltava River, is described in the chronicle of the village of Živohošť: “...towards the end of the Protectorate, a fierce fight between two American and two German planes took place over Živohošť and its surroundings, which ended with the shooting down of the German planes. The two German pilots jumped out of the planes with their parachutes and hovered like paragliders high above us. One of the airmen landed near the village of Morane and the other somewhere in the Sedlčany district. The Germans shot-up plane without a flier then flew at a crazy speed over the settlement of Hněvšín and descended over the forests of Hněvšín. It threatened the village of Chotilsko with a fall, where the alarmed citizens did not know where to hide, and finally, with a huge roar and explosion, it crashed into the field of Mr. Mašek near Chotilsko. Lots of people then wandered to see the wreckage of the plane, whose distinctive swastika shone in the distance. Until recently, the wreckage of the crashed aircraft lay near the sand pits in Chotilsko...” (Král 2007).

The report of the gendarmerie station in Chotilsko further elaborates on the event. At 12:10, four German fighters flew over Cím, and then attacked a bomber formation arriving from the south. One German fighter must have been hit by fire from the bombers because it started to burn. The pilot bailed out and was blown eastwards by the wind. A bomber was also hit, dropping several bombs near the village in an emergency, and citizens observed three, possibly four, airmen in parachutes. Another German fighter crashed in a field between Záborna Lhota and Chotilsko at 12:15. The commander of the gendarmerie station, M. Krupička, immediately set up a patrol to the wreck, which was relieved by SS Obersturmführer Dessau of the SS Pionierbattalion Sedlčany around 15:00. The plane crashed into the rapeseed field of Jaroslav Jarušek from Chotilsko and destroyed 10 acres of rapeseed. The commander of the gendarmerie patrol managed to note that the number 501209 was behind the cabin.²⁶

Despite the serial number recorded by the gendarmes, there is no more information on the case. The block of serial numbers 501xxx came from the LBB factory in České Budějovice. Their most common users were III./KG(J) 6, to which the machine wrecked at Krchleby belonged, and also the machine at Chotilsko.



Fig. 30 There is no contemporary photograph of the crash of Me 262 serial number 501209 at Chotilsko, but a unique photograph of a similar situation in the crash of Me 262 serial number 501201 on April 24, 1945, at Řisuty in Kladno may serve as an illustration. The serial numbers of both machines belong to a block from Leichtbau České Budějovice.

26 Národní archiv Praha, fond Zemské četnické velitelství Praha, kart.č. 903, hlášení Četnické stanice Cím



Fig. 31–32 There is no trace of the Me 262 crash in the field near Chotilsko, only small fragments of metal from the aircraft structure can be found in the topsoil after rain.

The crash site is located between Chotilsko and Záborná Lhota, in a field between the road and the Meredský brook, below the dam of Mich pond. The field is cultivated and no trace of the accident was observed during the site survey in 2008. On a subsequent visit, after rain, small metal fragments could be found on the surface of the freshly floated field.

A hundred Mustangs of the 357th and 55th FG attempted to defend the Me 262 from the Ruzyně base, partly successfully. In total, American pilots reported shooting down six and damaging three more Me 262s in the vicinity of the base. Of these claims, local research confirms the downing of three Me 262s (Hostivice-Litovice, Hostivice-Sobín, Smečno).

Smečno, Kladno district

On April 19, 1945, at 14:00 hours the District Gendarmerie Headquarters in Kladno received a call from Obw. Kratochvíl from the Gendarmerie station of Smečno. He reported that at 12:25 a German plane was shot down by American fighters about 1 km west of village and completely burned up. Its pilot “*Unteroffizier Bruno Rajszke*” had previously jumped out on a parachute, but it did not open and the pilot died.²⁷ In the gendarmes’ slightly mangled name of the pilot, one can recognize Uffz. Bruno Reischke (* 6. 10. 1921, Joachimsthal) of I./KG(J) 54 (Radtke 1990).²⁸

Eyewitness Jiří Blecha (* 1931) recalled: “*We were at home when we heard the roar of the planes and heard shooting. We ran out into the backyard and saw a German turbine, as we called them at the time, flying between Vinařice hill and the Májovka mine, followed by an American fighter and another one flying in from the side and firing at it. It was pretty low to the ground and we saw the turbine go smokey and we took cover inside the house. After it was over we ran out and ran where it had fallen, we ran across Skalka to Smečno and more*



Fig. 33 Uffz. Bruno Reischke’s body was first transported to Slaný to be buried, but this information could not be verified in primary sources and his name is not even on the list of exhumed German soldiers. His grave is currently located at the War Cemetery in Cheb.

²⁷ SOkA Kladno, fond Presidiální spisy Okresního úřadu Slaný, kart.č. 107, čj. Presid 270/1945

²⁸ Gräbersuche online [online]. Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge e.V. [Stand 28.5.2020]. <http://www.volksbund.de>



Fig. 34–35 Among the most interesting finds obtained by amateur excavations in 2013 is a compact part of the Jumo 004 jet engine. The find is currently on display in the Jizerskohorske technical museum in Bílý Potok.



Fig. 36–37 Other interesting finds, which always safely identify the Me 262, included engine blades or a cover plate with the manufacturer's marking (AIAG, Aluminium Industrie, AG Zürich) on the inside.

*people were running ahead of us and when we got to the road to Kačica we saw the turbine on the Zlonice field. The pilot had fallen out and was dead a short distance from the road... When we came back, we accidentally found the shells and also the belt clutch.”*²⁹

The crash site is located in the field “V Lipách” southwest of Smečno on the road to Kačice. During the initial site survey in 2009, no signs of a crash were observed in the field. Later, the site was identified by a group of amateur researchers who excavated the site by mechanization in 2013. A post-aircraft impact crater about 4 m in diameter and 2 m deep was uncovered, filled with small burnt parts, and demolished pieces of cover thrown back into the crater during backfilling. The fill was also supplemented by construction waste (rubble, bricks, roof tiles) used to level the surface of the site when the crater was filled in. The finds

²⁹ recording of the interview Jan Král, Smečno

included only some parts of the aircraft structure, the tail section, one of the two engines, and part of the wing. The nose section, landing gear, and second engine were missing. Therefore, it is clear that debris selection was carried out before the crater was filled in.

Combat engagements on April 19, 1945, ended the deployment of the Me 262 against American bombers, and new units with the Me 262 from Prague-Ruzyně were deployed against advancing Soviet troops southeast of Berlin. Casualties and accidental encounters with American fighters continued to occur, but priorities were already different. From May 6, 1945, the Me 262s were also involved in the fighting against the Prague Uprising and had to take part in the defense of their base at Ruzyně with heavy losses. As the chaos of the end of the war increased, the written sources dwindled.

Conclusion

In the present study, the author has tried to point out another specific type of archaeological monuments. He has carried out a basic survey to verify the archaeological possibilities and the telling abilities of each site. During repeated visits, he was also able to observe the process of natural archaeologization and the damage to the sites by unprofessional excavations.

Above all, it was possible to confront historical reports with field research and to demonstrate that written sources have their support in field findings and that evidence of historical events can still be found in the field. This has not been achieved in all cases and there is scope for further research. At the same time, not all events based on written sources alone could be corroborated by field findings. There is another area where archaeology can correct historical studies.

The field observation itself, despite time and technical limitations and the resulting subjectivity, shows the coincidence of some sites. The sites surveyed after the impact of the Me 262 show little or no observable damage to the terrain. The wreckage of the aircraft, if preserved in its original position, is on the surface. This represents a marked difference from the nature of piston-engined aircraft crashes, where it is the engine that usually causes the marked damage, creating an impact crater buried deep in the ground. For the time being, the author explains his observations by the different, lightweight design of the Me 262 and its Jumo 004 engines, which shattered on the surface after impact with no significant marks on the ground. It would certainly be welcome to support this observation with professional archaeological research as well.

Part of the more general issue is whether the archaeological findings contribute to resolving the contradictions that appear in the written sources. In the case of other types of German aircraft, archaeological excavations abroad suggest that their equipment often did not conform to regulations and technical specifications. The administration of the German Air Force showed different, higher-quality equipment than that found during archaeological excavations. At the top of the issue is the state-of-the-art German Me 262 machine, speculated to be equipped with the FuG 16ZY radio, allowing not only communication but also positioning and, in conjunction with the compass and autopilot, autonomous aircraft guidance. Another piece of equipment was the FuG 125 Hermine receiver which allowed semi-automatic guidance to landing. The survey to date has not been able to demonstrate the presence of special equipment and thus confirm or refute the technical descriptions.

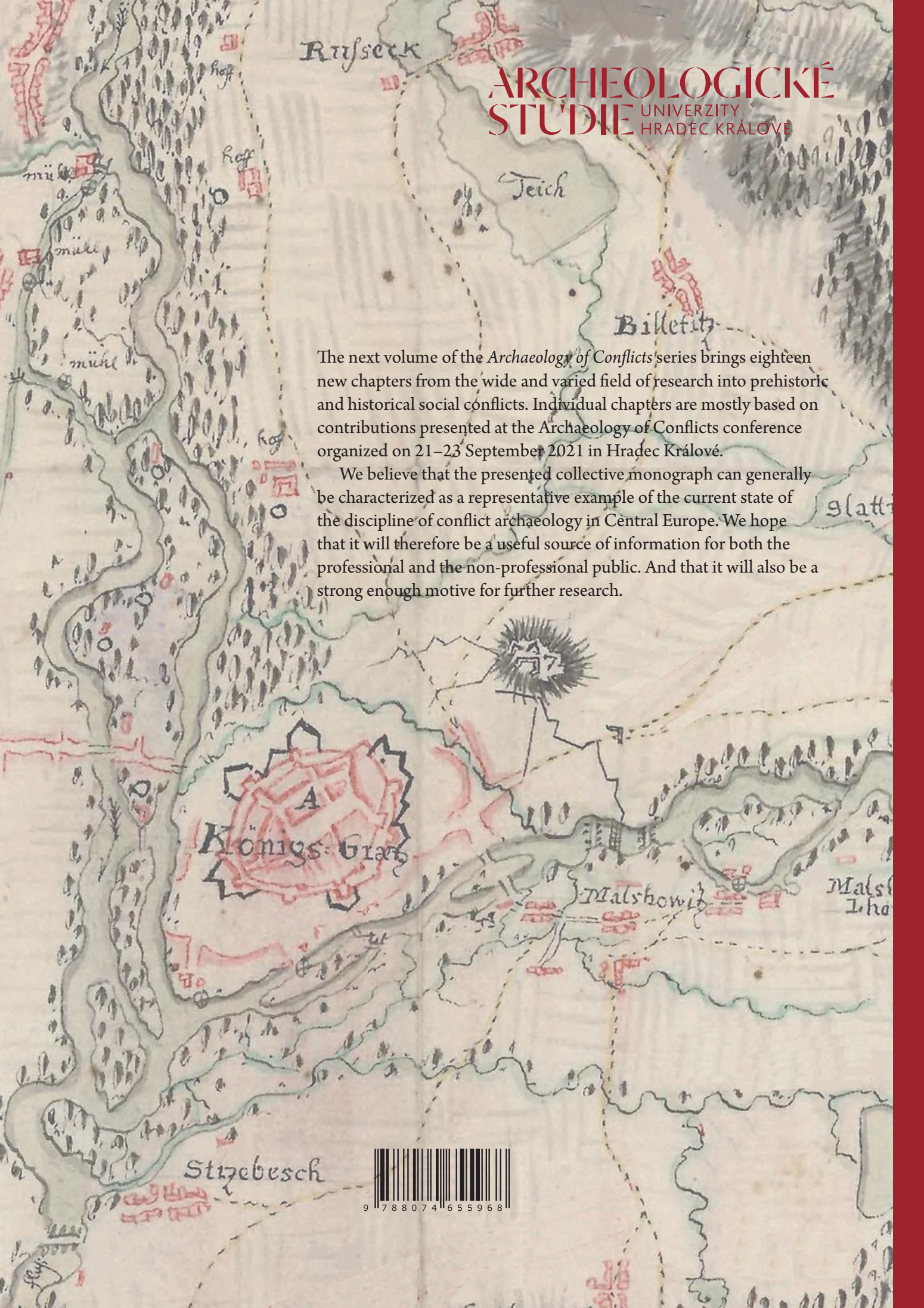
The electronic equipment and onboard instruments also required a network of ground transmitters (radio signals have been identified by field research at the Ruzyně and Plzeň bases). Overall, the operation of the new type required significant changes in logistics and facilities infrastructure. Air bases had to be completely rebuilt. As late as March 1945, only Ruzyně and Cheb with a concrete runway (the operation at České Budějovice airfield with a grass surface is unclear) were receiving Me 262s, only during April the Plzeň base was partially completed, and in May the Žatec base. Other runways were built in Vodochody, Roudnice near Hradec Králové or Vranovice near Brno. Anti-aircraft artillery was

rapidly deployed around the airfields. The logistics of repairs, supply of different fuels, and armament had to be completely changed. Undoubtedly, the remains of this ground infrastructure can be documented in the future by field survey or direct archaeological research.

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A historical map of the Hradec Králové region, showing the city of Hradec Králové (Königs-Gratz) in the center, surrounded by a river and various settlements. The map is drawn in a hand-drawn style with red and black ink. The city is labeled 'Königs-Gratz' and 'A'. Other labels include 'Russek', 'Teich', 'Biletitz', 'Stizebesch', 'Malschowitz', and 'Malsch I. h'. The map also shows various smaller settlements and landmarks, such as 'mühl', 'hoff', 'Roff', 'Kog', 'glatt', and 'Malsch I. h'.

ARCHEOLOGICKÉ STUDIE

UNIVERSITY
HRADEC KRÁLOVÉ

The next volume of the *Archaeology of Conflicts* series brings eighteen new chapters from the wide and varied field of research into prehistoric and historical social conflicts. Individual chapters are mostly based on contributions presented at the Archaeology of Conflicts conference organized on 21–23 September 2021 in Hradec Králové.

We believe that the presented collective monograph can generally be characterized as a representative example of the current state of the discipline of conflict archaeology in Central Europe. We hope that it will therefore be a useful source of information for both the professional and the non-professional public. And that it will also be a strong enough motive for further research.



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