

PEOPLE'S FIGHTER

DESIGNED, CONSTRUCTED, AND DEPLOYED DURING THE FINAL DAYS OF HITLER'S REICH, THE HEINKEL He 162 JET FIGHTER WAS A LAST-DITCH NAZI "WONDER WEAPON"

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He was short, aggressive and argumentative. He was also unquestionably loyal. Adolf Hitler could rely on him. For this loyalty and his Nazi fanaticism, he would be tried and found guilty at the Nuremberg war crimes trials held at the end of World War Two... and executed.

But before that

decide, with a coterie of army, navy and *Luftwaffe* generals, what the military needed in order to continue the war. He would be in charge of stepping up production, providing factory space, tooling, raw materials, etc., in order to maintain the flow of weapons from the *Reich's* overextended, undermanned arsenals.

But who was going to supply the labor to mine the

Germany had delayed putting itself on a full wartime footing, and the Nazis were paying the price for this inept blunder. The Allies were out-producing Germany three and four to one, and that negative ratio continued to grow. Although practically every older German male had been drafted for war production — aided by women and those men rejected for military service due to major physical incapacity — there was still a significant shortfall of

desperately needed manpower. If Germany had been forced to rely on her own native sources, the war would have been lost by 1942.

But the Nazis had a trump card — access to vast labor pools. This consisted of the captive populations of all the nations it had conquered since annexing Austria and Czechoslovakia in 1938 — and the Nazis exploited this subjugated populace with a ruthlessness seldom seen in all of history. With only limited exceptions, each vanquished state was compelled to send its male population, between the ages of 16 and 60, to work in Germany. Contrary to the Geneva Convention, prisoners of war, captured but never repatriated — beginning with over two million Polish soldiers and ending with nearly seven million Russians — swelled the roles of potential laborers. The French, Belgians, Dutch, Danes, Greeks, and Yugoslavs were also

metals, turn the lathes, insert the fasteners, weld the tank turrets, distill the gasoline, and build new factories? From pick and shovel men to final inspectors, Fritz Sauckel was the man responsible, the final arbiter — a small, unassuming looking, Hitler-mustached, party faithful who had joined the Brown Shirts in 1931 and had risen through the ranks to become Nazi Germany's top procurer of bodies. He was also, apparently, a man with evil in his heart. Unlike workers in Allied countries — except for the Soviet Union — the bulk of wartime Germany's work force did not consist of citizen volunteers. Free will was not involved and along with almost all able-bodied men in the military, including youths of 15, women began to be called up for employment in armaments factories beginning in late 1943.

happened, Fritz Sauckel, the *Gauleiter* (party leader of a regional area branch of the Nazi party) of Thuringia in Hitler's Nazi party hierarchy, would take on a number of new and vitally important roles during the war's last year. As German forces were driven back toward the borders of the embattled fatherland, he would become Plenipotentiary General for the Utilization of Manpower — Germany's labor czar; and in those dark and terrible days that meant slave labor. In 1943, Albert Speer, once Adolf Hitler's personal architect, had become Chief of Armaments Production. He would

This interesting piece of art illustrates He 162s returning from a patrol over northern Germany during the closing days of the war. It is doubtful the *Luftwaffe* was able to launch more than two to four fighters at a time given the numerous problems with the airframes, systems, and the turbojets.