**Close-up of Oblt. Günther Bertram's regular mount in the *Nachtjagd Schwarm* of Luftflotte 6, a He111 with five forward-firing 2 cm cannon, three of which were mounted in the cockpit, and two under the right-hand wing root of his aircraft. Between March and July 1943, Bertram and his crew notched up 14 victories with their makeshift Heinkel night fighter. (Coll. Günter Bertram).**

4. Finally, 10.(NJ)/ZG1 claimed 37 Abschüsse between 25 February and 31 July 1943, four of which were made in daylight (on 25 February and 12 May) and 33 by night. Most of the night-time victories of 10.(NJ)/ZG1 were achieved in *Helle Nachtjagd* fashion over the peninsula of Kertsch (Crimea) during May-June 1943, closely co-operating with searchlight units in the area. One of its Bf110 pilots, Ofw. Josef Kociok amassed 17 night Abschüsse (15 of which were eventually *anerkannt*) plus 16 victory claims in daylight between March and September 1943, which earned him the award of the *Ritterkreuz* on 31 July 1943. He met his fate on 26-27 September 1943, when his Bf110 G-2 collided with a DB-3 (IL-4) during an interception over Kertsch. Kociok's *Bordfunker* Fw. Wegerhoff baled out safely but the parachute of the *Ritterkreuzträger* failed to deploy and Kociok fell to his death 20 km SE of Kertsch. Some 30 years after the war, one of the members of 10.(NJ)/ZG1 Ofw. Fritz Müller recalled how the unit was employed:



*10./ZG1 and its successor, 4./NJG200, was a 'maid of all work', basically deployed as night fighters only over Kertsch and (to a lesser extent) Stalino, occasionally over the Kuban front as well. We flew the Bf110 and had no Lichtenstein or comparable equipment on board. Two organ pipes were installed beneath the wings, to mark us out to our own Flak. As an experiment, a few machines, mine included, were fitted with a 'Spanner'. I remember that I also had - I was the only one - an infra-red searchlight under the fuselage (for a short time). That soon got broken, one time when I was flying at about 450 km/h: the rear attachment of the searchlight fairing broke. Apart from that, to my recollection, nobody in 10./ZG1 was able to achieve anything with the 'Spanner'. Most of all, the stars confused me, as they all showed up on the scope.*

*We flew illuminated night fighting over Kertsch: scrambles from our dispersal point, without regard to wind conditions, on a completely dark airfield. Wait at the radio beacon until the target is caught by a searchlight. Then "Otto-Otto" from fighter to ground. The Flak Regiment is listening and confines its fire to the illuminated target until the fighter transmits "Pauke-Pauke", meaning that it is at most 30 seconds behind the target. The Flak Regiment listens and ceases fire, so that even the shells already loaded are not fired. Landing without a protracted approach. The flarepath was only switched on at the pilot's request, about 1 km before landing. As soon as the aircraft was on the ground, the flarepath was turned off again. The results were good. About 14 days after the first operation (and therefore the first victory) a Russian came down by parachute and was taken prisoner. He reported that the bombers crews were scared of Kertsch. They had been flying for months without losses, then all at once they were getting shot down, no more attacks without losses. The Strait of Kertsch had meanwhile become known among his comrades as the Strait of Death. Anyway, they didn't know what was going on: all at once the Flak stopped firing; despite that, shortly afterward there would be a fearful crashing in the machine, it would catch fire and you baled out in great haste.*

*I can only confirm the shock effect on the Russian crews of night fighting over Kertsch. On the first operations the Soviets were coming over at altitudes of about 2000 m, after a few days they came higher, then higher still, up to about 5000 m. In the end I was choosing my holding position over the harbour of Kertsch at over 7000 m, to be able to dive to build up speed if needs be.*

## 12-13 March 1943

Bombing forces of the 4 and 5 VA targeted Bagerowo, west of Kertsch, four Boston IIIs failing to return. Two of these (both belonging to 5 VA) were reportedly destroyed by Flak over the target, the other two probably falling foul of Nachtjäger. Three crews of 10.(Nachtjagd)/ZG1 achieved four bomber kills during the course of the evening of the 12th March, for the Staffel's 3rd -6th confirmed victories. These included two victories by Ofw. Kociok; his first claim of the night concerned the sole loss sustained from a force of 22 MBR-2s of the Black Sea Fleet that bombed Kertsch-2 airfield.

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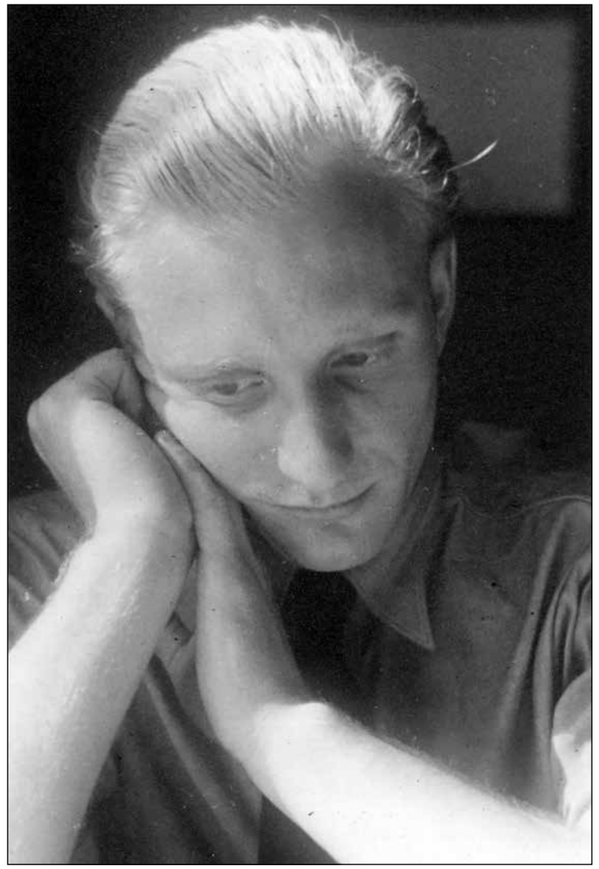
| **Fw. Heinrich Melschert: 1** | **10.(NJ)/ZG1** | **DB-3** | **40 km SE Krasnograd: 2.500 m.** | **18.55** | **unidentified** |
| **Oblt. Egon Mangold: 1** | **10.(NJ)/ZG1** | **TB-7** | **25 km SE Kertsch: 3.000 m.** | **19.44** | **prob. 219 BAD Boston III** |
| **Ofw. Josef Kociok: 13** | **10.(NJ)/ZG1** | **MBR-2** | **N. Kertsch: 3.200 m.** | **21.43** | **18 MRAE 119 MRAP MBR-2** |
| **Ofw. Josef Kociok: 14** | **10.(NJ)/ZG1** | **DB-3** | **N. Kertsch: 3.000 m.** | **21.45** | **219 BAD Boston III** |

## 14-15 March 1943

Flying a He111 of the *Nahnachtjagdschwarm Luftwaffenkommando Ost* from Orscha airfield on their 74th *Feindflug*, Oblt. Bertram and his crew carried out a routine *Bandenbekämpfung* (partisan suppression) patrol routed over the Orscha-Brjansk-Smolensk-Orscha area between 22.08 and 01.30 hrs. About halfway through their flight, they encountered an R-5, which Bertram sent down to crash-land to the east of Brjansk, the Heinkel taking five machine gun hits in return fire. It was Bertram's first official victory; he and his crew were credited with 13 more night Abschüsse on the He111 during March-July 1943.

60 years after the end of the war, Oblt. Bertram recounted the establishment of the *Nachtjagd Ost*:

*I was born on 2 November 1920 in Hamburg. In 1939 I had my Abitur school leaving certificate and in November 1939 enlisted in the Luftwaffe. After the usual period of induction for new recruits I went to flying school in Guben in January 1940. Flight training for the A + B Scheine took six months to complete. Those cadets displaying officer potential went on to C-Schüle at Lömeritz for a furthur six months training. It was during this period that I was promoted to Leutnant. As I had applied to the bomber arm I completed four weeks blind flying training in Copenhagen before being posted to the large bomber training school at Tutow near Demmin in Mecklenburg. From here I was assigned to KG4 based at Fassberg, situated between Hamburg and Hannover. This Geschwader was tasked with mining harbours and ports along the British coast. After a further period of blind flying training on the He111 in France, some thirteen crews were transferred to Riga on the Eastern Front, assigned to fly supply dropping sorties for units encircled on the ground. As these flights were flown at low level there was always a great risk of taking hits from ground fire. After thirteen sorties we were withdrawn to fly mine-laying sorties from Königsberg over the bay of Kronstadt, which was the mission being carried out at that time by our Geschwader. After some twenty sorties the situation on the Eastern Front had become precarious and accordingly our Geschwader was shifted to Sestchinskaya on the central sector of the front in order to support the hard-pressed ground forces from the air in the region of Rheshew. I flew some eighty sorties over this sector. It was at this point that the first steps were taken to establish what would become the so-called Nachtjagdschwärme Ost. A single crew was selected from each Kampfgeschwader. A crew was also made available from*



**Oblt. Bertram concentrating on a game of chess during a break in operations at Sechtschinskaja airfield (Coll. Günter Bertram).**

*the Fernaufklärer (long-range reconnaissance) under Oberleutnant Schneeweis. As the first Schwarm only comprised three machines (two He111s and a single Ju88), fuel and munitions replenishment, along with maintenance and servicing requirements for the aircraft were always undertaken at the airfield of whichever larger unit we happened to be operating from. As luck would have it, in Sestchinskaya this happened to be my old unit KG4, while later in Smolensk we were based on the field used by a Nachtaufklärungsstaffel and later still in Orsha we came under the umbrella of the Fernaufklärungsstaffel, with which our Schwarmführer Oblt. Schneeweis had previously seen service.*

*Initially we were to hunt and engage the small Russian aircraft, mostly U2 and R5 biplanes, that operated every night supplying mines and shells to partisan groups located behind the front lines. Our large and ponderous aircraft were hardly suited to this form of aerial interdiction but there were no other available aircraft that could be employed in this role. In terms of tactics our three machines were assigned to patrol in boxes designated after varieties of fruit -Apple-Pear-Plum-Peach- which extended from the front to deep into the rear areas with each aircraft deployed to cover a particular sector. We tended to operate at high altitude in order to be able to better discern the landing sites and drop zones. This was possible since the partisans would light bonfires on the ground in order to guide their small supply machines to their destinations. This tactic of course enabled our own crews to locate the landing zones and, if we were lucky, to shoot down the Russian machine either just as it was going into land or taking off. This was how I was able to achieve my first two victories. Naturally nights when the moon was full particularly favoured our operations and it was on such moonlit nights that I recorded these victories. My first victim had only just got airborne. Closing from astern, I swept alongside and past it, presenting my Bordfunker with the opportunity to unleash a long salvo from his MG. Given that the Russians only managed speeds of between 150-180 kph, while I had to maintain the speed of our cumbersome He111 at 230 kph at least, achieving a downing was always very much down to good fortune. Later on an additional MG was mounted in the forward fuselage, operated by the Bordschütze, firing through a side window. This weapon was particularly suited to strafing aircraft on the ground and we later destroyed a further four aircraft employing this method although these were not of course 'victories' that I could add to my tally as such. Hosing the enemy planes on the ground from low level would usually result in a hit in the fuel tank causing the aircraft to go up in flames. We would usually fly back to the vicinity on the following day to record the scene of our victims' demise photographically. Of course, since we were flying a bomber type we occasionally operated with cargoes of 50kg bombs. If we failed to make contact with enemy aircraft in the vicinity of a landing zone identified by a beacon on the ground we would then empty our bomb loads over the illuminated zone.*

*I shot down my third victim over Smolensk and once again had a stroke of good luck. One late afternoon as the sun was setting a Russian DB-3 F over-flew our field. We had already run up our engines for our night sortie so I was able to get airborne almost immediately. By the time we had reached an altitude of 3,000 metres it was already dark but I was able to discern the machine ahead of me and immediately attacked, opening fire with the single fuselage-mounted forward-firing cannon. The Russian bomber crashed to the ground in flames. Once again I was unable to file an official victory claim since weather conditions the following day were too bad to allow me to take a photograph of the scene.*

*Much later we shifted to Orsha and it was while operating from there that the Schwarmführer Oblt. Schneeweis failed to return from a sortie* (on 28-29 July 1943, author's note). *I took over the Schwarm, being appointed Staffelkapitän. By now we were operating at Staffel strength. I achieved my next three victories while flying out of Orsha over Konotop in the sector of the Kursk salient. As we finally arrived over Kursk we were hard on the heels of three 'Maxim Gorky' four engine bombers that had been caught in searchlights operated by the Flak, which they had managed to evade. Due to the immense engine exhaust flames they trailed - enabling us to sight them from long range - we enjoyed a great advantage over these bombers. The chief disadvantage lay in their low speed - barely 180 kph - rendering an attack from astern virtually impossible. The only way to bring them down was from the flanks. Our He111 had been fitted out in Wiener Neustadt with five 2 cm cannon. They were utilised for the first - and last - time on this sortie to bring down the Viermots. I manoeuvred myself side-on to and some distance ahead of the Russians and simply let them fly through the sights. All three machines were instantly set alight, ablaze from starboard to port wing-tip. We returned to Orsha in the dark to replenish our munitions for a second sortie, which as luck would have it, could not be flown.*



*We had in the interim received orders to move to Neuburg-Donau, where we were to be re-equipped with the Ju88 mounting oblique weapons, the so-called schräge Musik. My Staffel moved by rail in September 1943, leaving our He111s in Orsha... that in a nutshell is what I can relate of the beginnings of the Nachtjagd Ost. Our machines were fitted with neither search radar - as was usually the case in the west - nor was there any kind of ground control as later existed in the shape of the Nachtjagdzüge - the night fighter trains. Up to this point it would not be possible to talk of anything other than piecemeal night fighting and our successes were consequently negligible. Only following our move back to Germany and our re-equipment with the Ju88 was Nachtjagd Ost put on a more organised footing.*

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| **Oblt. Günter Bertram: 1** | **Nah NJ Schwarm Lwkdo. Ost** | **R-5** | **E. Brjansk** | **23.50** | **unidentified.** |
| *Note: on this night, a 14 AP DD Li-2 was reportedly shot down in flames by a night fighter in the area of Roslavl, 130 km NW of Bryansk* | | | | | |

## 19-20 March 1943

Oblt. Bertram and his crew flew a *Bandenbekämpfung* sortie from Orscha into the Seschtschinskaja area between 21.54 and 01.07 hrs in a He111 of the *Nahnachtjagdschwarm Luftwaffenkommando Ost*, for their 79th *Feindflug*. Towards midnight, Bertram engaged an R-5 in Grid Square 3458/25 Ost, shooting it down near Kletnya. *Bordfunker* Ofw. Schewe noted in his *Leistungsbuch*: *Strong defensive fire, took one hit*.

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| **Oblt. Günter Bertram: 2** | **Nah NJ Schwarm Lwkdo. Ost** | **R-5** | **nr. Kletnya, 70 km W. Brjansk (3458)** | **23.50** | **unidentified** |

## 29-30 March 1943

Fw. Müller of 10.(NJ)/ZG1 achieved his first (unidentified) night Abschuss, as he noted in his diary: *29.3.43: 1 Boston bomber shot down (20.20 hours). Own aircraft had hits in both engines, nose, cockpit, rear fuselage, tail assembly. Starboard engine failed. Crash landing in Bagerowo. Self wounded in left hand by small shell splinter*.

A Staffel comrade of Fw. Müller downed one out of 10 MBR-2s that took part in a raid against the port of Kertsch.

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| **Fw. Fritz Müller** | **10.(NJ)/ZG1** | **Boston** | **sea of Azov 15 km NE Kertsch: 3.000 m.** | **20.20** | **unidentified.** |
| *Note: claim not listed in 10.(NJ)/ZG1 Confirmed Abschussübersicht* | | | | | |
| **Lt. Reinhard Wübbenhorst: 1** | **10.(NJ)/ZG1** | **MBR-2** | **6 km N. Kertsch** | **20.26** | **18 MRAE 119 MRAP MBR-2** |

## 10-11 April 1943

Oblt. Bertram and his He111 crew of the *Nahnachtjagdschwarm Luftwaffenkommando Ost* flew their 86th *Feindflug*, a 225-minute Nachtjagd sortie from Orscha airfield between 18.35 and 22.20 hrs, into the Brjansk area. Upon their return, they reported two *Luftkämpfe* (air combats) and a PS-84 Abschuss. Their victim was probably a Li-2 of the 101 AP DD that failed to return from a bombing mission against the railway station of Ordzhonikidzegrad near Bryansk.

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| **Oblt. Günter Bertram: 3** | **Nah NJ Schwarm Lwkdo. Ost** | **PS-84** | **nr. Sudimir, S. Zhizdra (44454)** | **20.56** | **prob. 101 AP DD Li-2** |

## 11-12 April 1943

Taking off from Orscha at 18.50 hrs for their 88th *Feindflug*, Oblt. Bertram and his He111 crew flew a night reconnaissance of the Welikije-Luki area. Two and a half hours later, they came across two giant four-engined TB-3s (An-6s), which they shot down within ten minutes of each other. At 23.30 hrs, the victorious crew safely landed at Konotop.

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| **Oblt. Günter Bertram: 4** | **Nah NJ Schwarm Lwkdo. Ost** | **TB-3** | **nr. Telchye, 50 km NNE Orel (6455)** | **21.25** | **unidentified** |
| **Oblt. Günter Bertram: 5** | **Nah NJ Schwarm Lwkdo. Ost** | **TB-3** | **nr. Telchye, 50 km NNE Orel (6455)** | **21.35** | **unidentified** |

## 14-15 April 1943

Oblt. Bertram and his He111 crew made their 90th *Feindflug*, a 275-minute action-packed Nachtjagd sortie from Seschtschinskaja airfield into the Brjansk area. They fought two indecisive air combats with TB-3s, before shooting down a PS-84 to the east of Brjansk, taking hits from 'friendly' Flak fire and from their Russian opponents in the process.

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| **Oblt. Günter Bertram: 6** | **Nah NJ Schwarm Lwkdo. Ost** | **PS-84** | **5 km E. Brjansk** | **21.00** | **unidentified** |

## 15-16 April 1943

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| **Fw. Heinrich Melschert: 2** | **10.(NJ)/ZG1** | **SB-3** | **Black Sea 110 km SSW Kertsch: 2.000 m.** | **20.00** | **5 GAP DD Il-4** |

## 16-17 April 1943

During April-May 1943, parts of IV./NJG5 were temporarily stationed at Insterburg near Danzig in Eastern Prussia. Hptm. Wittgenstein and his crew (Uffz. Kümmritz and Gefr. Matzuleit) flying a Ju88 C-6 opened the score for the Gruppe on 16-17 April with two confirmed DB-3 Abschüsse, in co-operation with 18./Ln.-Rgt. 214 (JLO St.Fw. Michallek). These were Michallek's 37th and 38th *Abschussbeteiligungen*. Their victims have been identified as Il-4s of the 8 GAP ADD, which were on their homeward flight from a bombing attack by a force of an estimated 20 aircraft on Danzig. (It should be noted that although the KTB of the *Küstenbefehlshaber östl. Ostsee* entry for 16 April 1943 states that '*Nachtjäger destroyed 2 aircraft near Insterburg and 1 north of Tilsit*', details of a third Nachtjagd claim for the night have not been found to date).

Heinz Kümmritz served as *Bordfunker* in Hptm. Wittgenstein's crew until December 1943, participating in 43 Abschüsse. He recounts the early operations in Russia:

*The transfer from Döberitz to East Prussia took place in April 1943, for 5 to 6 weeks we were based mainly at Insterburg. During this time there were 7 or 8 Russian air attacks (from the far away area around Moscow) in the form of small bomber streams - loose groups of some 30 to 60 machines, mainly B-25 and TU bombers. Attacks only took place on moonlit nights at, for the attackers' dangerous, times. One could set one's watch by the time of their crossing of the border. This helped both the control post staff as the crews to be ready for their tasks.*

*The Russians did not fly at extreme heights. The opposite was the case. Their altitude was rarely greater than 4000 metres. We found this very convenient, as we rarely had to don our oxygen masks. To the best of my knowledge there were no problems during this time with the Lichtenstein equipment, there was no interference or jamming to trouble us. On the whole the damage caused by the Russian attacks was very small. One had the impression that the Russians dropped their bombs indiscriminately, at best on visible lights, which at the time in East Prussia was often the case. We never heard of any major damage. One of the more serious cases was, when a machine which we had shot down (a B-25) crashed with its full bomb load close to an estate near Schlossberg in east Prussia.*

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| **Hptm. H. Prinz zu Sayn-Wittgenstein: 25** | **Stab IV./NJG5** | **DB-3** | **near Insterburg** | **23.13** | **8 GAP ADD DB-3** |
| **Hptm. H. Prinz zu Sayn-Wittgenstein: 26** | **Stab IV./NJG5** | **DB-3** | **Schirwint near Tilsit** | **23.55** | **8 GAP ADD DB-3** |

## 17-18 April 1943

The 102 AP DD bombed a Luftwaffe airfield near the Kertsch railroad, for the loss of three Li-2s, including one that was seen shot down while leaving the target. In addition, a Li-2 of the 3 AP DD was shot down NW of Kertsch. Fw. Heinrich 'Heinz' Melschert of 10.(NJ)/ZG1 was credited with two 'Bostons' and a DB-3F destroyed, for his third and fourth victories. (Almost six weeks later, on 28 May, he was shot down in a Bf110 G-2 (W.Nr. 6258) by a Russian fighter over Krymskaya and posted missing together with his *Bordfunker*).

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| **Fw. Heinrich Melschert: 3** | **10.(NJ)/ZG1** | **Boston** | **15 km NW Kertsch: 3.400 m.** | **21.54** | **prob. 3 AP DD Li-2 or 102 AP DD Li-2** |
| **Fw. Heinrich Melschert: 4** | **10.(NJ)/ZG1** | **DB-3F** | **Sea of Azov, 100 km NNW Kertsch: 2.000 m.** | **22.22** | **prob. 8 GAP DD DB-3F** |

## 19-20 April 1943

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| **Oblt. Egon Mangold: 2** | **10.(NJ)/ZG1** | **PS-84** | **10 km NE Taman: 5.000 m.** | **21.02** | **3 AP DD or 102 AP DD Li-2** |

## 22-23 April 1943

Operating against a force of an estimated 20 Soviet aircraft that penetrated into the Tilsit-Insterburg-Gumbinnen-Pillau area and flying in a Ju88 C-6, Hptm. Wittgenstein achieved a double confirmed victory under ground control of StFw. Michallek, the JLO of *Dunkelnachtjagd* box *Grasmücke*. These marked Michallek's 39th and 40th *Abschussbeteiligungen*.

**The Lisunov Li-2 was a license built version of the DC-3 which was adapted to carry a small bomb load for nocturnal attacks. (Coll. ww2images.com)**

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| **Hptm. H. Prinz zu Sayn-Wittgenstein: 27**<br>*Note: victory confirmed on 16.12.1944* | **Stab IV./NJG5** | **DB-3** | **- (*Grasmücke*): 4.000 m.** | **23.25** | **unidentified.** |
| **Hptm. H. Prinz zu Sayn-Wittgenstein: 28**<br>*Note: victory confirmed on 16.12.1944* | **Stab IV./NJG5** | **B-25** | **SE ? (*Grasmücke*)** | **00.30** | **unidentified.** |

## 26-27 April 1943

Ofw. Josef Kociok reported two Abschüsse, both of which were later *anerkannt*. His first victim was a B-25 of the 14 GAP DD, which was shot down during a bombing raid on Zaporizja. The pilot Gds. Serzhant Prokhorov later declared that he saw Kociok's searchlight-coned Bf110 whilst descending under his parachute.

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| **Ofw. Josef Kociok: 15** | **10.(NJ)/ZG1** | **SB-2** | **4 km N. Pavlivka** | **22.25** | **14 GAP DD B-25** |
| **Ofw. Josef Kociok: 16** | **10.(NJ)/ZG1** | **Yak-4** | **nr. Krasne, 10 km SW Pawlograd** | **22.30** | **unidentified** |

## 27-28 April 1943

Fw. Müller of 10.(NJ)/ZG1 noted in his diary: *27.4.43. Shot at and hit a DB 3, which was then destroyed by Lt. Wübbenhorst.*

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| **Lt. Reinhard Wübbenhorst: 2** | **10.(NJ)/ZG1** | **DB-3** | **10 km NW Kertsch** | **20.37** | **5 GAP DD Il-4** |

## 2-3 May 1943

Operating against a nuisance raid by an estimated 15 Soviet aircraft penetrating into the Tilsit-Wehlau-Rastenburg-north of Johannisburg area, Hptm. Wittgenstein in a Ju88 C-6 achieved one confirmed victory.

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| **Hptm. H. Prinz zu Sayn-Wittgenstein: 29**<br>*Note: victory confirmed on 16.12.1944* | **Stab IV./NJG5** | **DB-3** | **SE Insterburg/nr. Gumbinnen: 3.800 m.** | **22.37** | **unidentified.** |

## 3-4 May 1943

Flying his 99th *Feindflug*, a night fighting sortie into the Orscha area, from Smolensk airfield between 20.05 and 22.09 hrs in a He111 of the NJ Schwarm Luftflotte 6, Oblt. Bertram achieved two Abschüsse.

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| **Oblt. Günter Bertram: 7** | **NJ Schwarm LF6** | **B-25 C** | **nr. Kochanava, 30 km W. Orscha (9563)** | **20.50** | **unidentified** |
| **Oblt. Günter Bertram: 8** | **NJ Schwarm LF6** | **PS-84** | **nr. Putinai, 60 km NNE Schatalowska airfield (2529)** | **21.50** | **unidentified** |

## 9-10 May 1943

Oblt. Bertram bagged his ninth confirmed victory whilst hunting after a Soviet bombing raid against the railway stations at Brjansk. His *Funker* Ofw. Heinz Schewe noted in his *Leistungsbuch*: *102nd Feindflug counting as 115th Frontflug, 9.5.43, 22.30-00.38, 128 mins, Seschtschinskaja-Brjansk-S'kaja, Nachtjagd in area Brjansk, 9th Abschuss 'TB-3' (4-mot) at 4467/35Ost (23.55 hrs), hit by return fire*. The Nachtjäger's quarry crashed near the front line with the loss of four of the crew.

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| **Oblt. Günter Bertram: 9** | **NJ Schwarm LF6** | **TB-3** | **15 km E. Brjansk (4467)** | **23.55** | **1 GAP ADD TB-3** |

## 10-11 May 1943

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| **Oblt. Marotke (?)** | **10.(NJ)/ZG1** | **DB-3** | **Sea of Azov, 40 km NW Kertsch: 4.000 m.** | **20.59** | **21 AP DD II-4** |

## 11-12 May 1943

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| **Unknown crew** | **10.(NJ)/ZG1** | **DB-3** | **Sea of Azov, 60 km NE Kertsch: 4.200 m.** | **20.00** | **452 NBAP Boston (*damaged*).** |

*Note: flying at a height of 4,000 m. attacked and damaged by two 'Bf109s' over Katerles, NW of Kertsch ca. 20.00 hrs, caught fire on landing and written off. Claim confirmed as full victory to 10.(NJ)/ZG1, date unknown.*

## 12-13 May 1943

A Boston of the 452 NBAP failed to return from a bombing raid on the German airfield at Taman, probably the victim of Lt. Reichelt of 10.(NJ)/ZG1.

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| **Lt. Hubert Reichelt: 1** | **10.(NJ)/ZG1** | **Kor-1** | **SE Taman: 4.000 m.** | **20.36** | **prob. 452 NBAP Boston serial nr. 12789** |

## 15-16 May 1943

During the evening, 30 aircraft of 2 GAD DD bombed Dnjepropetrovsk, whilst a second force of seven aircraft of this Division attacked Brjansk. Four Il-4s failed to return, which matches the number of four Abschüsse that were achieved by Ofw. Kociok of 10.(NJ)/ZG1, for his Staffel's 20th - 23rd confirmed victories. Possibly, his third claim concerned a TB-3 of 7 GAP DD that was attacked by a Bf110 in the Jelcy area. The 'heavy' escaped with severe battle damage, only to crash upon return to its home base.

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| **Ofw. Josef Kociok: 17** | **10.(NJ)/ZG1** | **PS-84** | **nr. Pidpil'ne: 1.000 m.** | **21.34** | **3 GAP or 18 GAP DD II-4** |
| **Ofw. Josef Kociok: 18** | **10.(NJ)/ZG1** | **PS-84** | **nr. Pidpil'ne: 1.200 m.** | **21.41** | **3 GAP or 18 GAP DD II-4** |
| **Ofw. Josef Kociok: 19** | **10.(NJ)/ZG1** | **SB-2** | **nr. Melioratyvne: 3.500 m.** | **22.05** | **prob. 3 GAP or 18 GAP DD II-4, poss. 7 GAP DD TB-3** |
| **Ofw. Josef Kociok: 20** | **10.(NJ)/ZG1** | **PS-84** | **nr. Ocheretuvate: 3.800 m.** | **22.54** | **3 GAP or 18 GAP DD II-4** |

## 4-5 June 1943

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| **Lt. Hubert Reichelt: 2** | **10.(NJ)/ZG1** | **DB-3** | **nr. Biagoveshchenskaya, SE Taman: 3.000 m.** | **20.49** | **367 BAP SB-2** |



## 11-12 June 1943

Several hundred Red Air Force sorties were dispatched to attack targets in the Orel area, including 360 'heavies' that raided Nowosil. The forces encountered negligible fighter opposition, just three German night fighters being seen. A crew of 9./KG27 flying in He111 H-16 1G+BT (Wrk.Nr. 8261) claimed two four-engined 'heavies' destroyed, which can be tied to the loss of two TB-3 bombers of the 54 ADD Division. Several returning TB-3 crews reported that they had observed one of these air combats, followed by a burning aircraft falling on the Soviet side of the frontline. Uffz. Möbius, a pilot in 9./KG27 at the time recalls: *Sometimes at daybreak, lumbering enemy machines came at us out of the darkness. They were nuisance raiders who had dropped their bombs on the airfield. We were all talking about night fighting against these crates and I think Obltn. Walter Grasemann was the only one who lingered over the field in an He111 and brought down some machines with it*.

A crew of 10.(NJ)/ZG1 claimed a four-engined 'TB-7' destroyed, which was, in fact, an MBR-2 flying boat.

**Right: Hptm. Walter Grasemann, the St.Kpt. of 9./KG27, was awarded the *Ritterkreuz* on 9 October 1943. Whilst still an Oblt., Grasemann claimed three Russian four-engined bombers destroyed in his He111 during June 1943 (Coll. Walter Waiss/Traditionsgemeinschaft Boelcke e.V.)**

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| **Oblt. Walter Grasemann: 1** | **9./KG27** | **Viermot** | **-** | **-** | **54 AD DD TB-3** |
| **Oblt. Walter Grasemann: 2** | **9./KG27** | **Viermot** | **-** | **-** | **54 AD DD TB-3** |
| **Oblt. Hans-Joachim Janke: 1** | **10.(NJ)/ZG1** | **TB-7** | **40 km E. Taman (76723): 3.200 m.** | **21.20** | **119 OMRAP MBR-2 serial nr. 133135** |

## 12-13 June 1943

Kertsch was bombed by 10 DB-3s of the 5 AP (5 GMTAP), 10 B-3 Bostons of the 36 AP (36 MTAP) and by nine MBR-2s of the 119 AP. They encountered strong opposition from both Flak and Bf110 night fighters, one DB-3 and a B-3 being lost, both falling foul of the *Staffelkapitän* of 10.(NJ)/ZG1 Oblt. Mangold.

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| **Oblt. Egon Mangold: 3** | **10.(NJ)/ZG1** | **TB-4** | **Sea of Azov, 40 km NNE Kertsch: 800 m.** | **20.47** | **36 MTAP 36 AP B-3 Boston** |
| **Oblt. Egon Mangold: 4** | **10.(NJ)/ZG1** | **DB-3F** | **Sea of Azov, 40 km NE Kertsch: 3.300 m.** | **21.14** | **5 GMTAP 5 AP DB-3** |

## 13-14 June 1943

Oblt. Hans-Joachim Janke of 10.(NJ)/ZG1 attacked an IL-4 of 5 GMTAP ChF over Kertsch. The Soviet bomber pilot successfully evaded five attacks, but on his sixth firing pass, the Nachtjäger collided with his quarry, both aircraft crashing into the sea. Oblt. Janke and his *Funker* baled out of their Bf110 G-2 and were rescued by a Do-24, as was the pilot of the IL-4. A second bomber, a Li-2 of the 102 AP DD fell foul of Oblt. Mangold, St.Kpt. of 10.(NJ)/ZG1 during a sortie to bomb the port of Taman.

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| **Oblt. Egon Mangold: 5** | **10.(NJ)/ZG1** | **SB-2** | **15 km S. Taman: 1.400 m.** | **20.54** | **102 AP DD Li-2** |
| **Oblt. Hans-Joachim Janke: 2** | **10.(NJ)/ZG1** | **DB-3F** | **Sea of Azov, 30 km NW Kertsch: 5.000 m.** | **21.17** | **5 GMTAP ChF II-4** |

## 15-16 June 1943

There were no Soviet losses to the German night fighter or Flak defences on this night, but Ofw. Müller of 10.(NJ)/ZG1 noted in his private diary: *Second night Abschuss, of an SB 2 with radial engines, shot at another SB 2. Müller's claim was later officially credited as his first confirmed victory, although the date is lacking in the* 10.(NJ)/ZG1 confirmed *Abschussübersicht*.

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| **Ofw. Fritz Müller: 1** | **10.(NJ)/ZG1** | **SB-2** | **Sea of Azov, 20 km NE Kertsch: 3.000 m.** | **20.52** | **5 GAP DD II-4 (*damaged*).** |

*Note: after bombing Kertsch harbour at 20.40 hrs attacked twice by Bf110 over the Kertsch Straits, damaged and three of crew wounded, landed Staronizhestebliewskaja airfield at 21.27 hrs. Aircraft destroyed in Fw190 strafing attack on 25.6.1943*

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**Hptm. Grasemann is greeted by his *Staffel* after the *Ritterkreuz* award (Coll. Walter Waiss/Traditionsgemeinschaft Boelcke e.V.)**

## 16-17 June 1943

Ofw. Kociok of 10.(NJ)/ZG1 was credited with the shooting down of the two Bostons that were lost in the Kertsch area on this night. His second victim was a Boston of the 452 BAP, 132 NBAD, which fell into the sea near Kertsch at 21.17 hrs.

He111 H-16 1G+BT (Wrk.Nr. 8261) of 9./KG27 took off from Olsuf'yevo at 22.00 hrs in the hands of Oblt. Walter Grasemann for a Nachtjagd sortie in the Krutaya area. During the *Feindflug*, it encountered a Pe-8 of the 890 AP DD flown by Mayor Arkharov that was engaged in a bombing sortie to Olsuf'yevo airfield. In the ensuing combat, the Pe-8 crew hit and severely damaged the He111. The German crew parachuted to safety, all landing just 2 kms behind the frontline in 'friendly' territory; their aircraft crashed and burnt out 2 km NE of Lyudinovo.

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| Ofw. Josef Kociok: 21 | 10.(NJ)/ZG1 | Boston | Sea of Azov, 30 km NNW Kertsch: 4.500 m. | 21.00 | 36 MTAP ChF Boston |
| Ofw. Josef Kociok: 22 | 10.(NJ)/ZG1 | Boston | Black Sea, 15 km S. Taman: 3.000 m. | 21.20 | 452 BAP Boston |
| Oblt. Walter Grasemann: 3 | 9./KG27 | Viermot | nr. Ljudinovo | 23.30 | 890 AP DD Pe-8 (damaged) |

## 20-21 June 1943

Oblt. Bertram left Seschtschinskaja airfield at the controls of a He111 at 21.44 hrs for his 108th *Feindflug*, a Nachtjagd sortie in the area of Brjansk-Gomel. During a 178 minutes patrol, he reported three *Feindberührungen* and destroyed a DB-3F for his tenth Abschuss.

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| Oblt. Günter Bertram: 10 | NJ Schwarm LF6 | DB-3F | 50 km WSW Brjansk (3476) | 23.30 | unidentified |



## 24-25 June 1943

Ofw. Müller of the 10.(NJ)/ZG1 achieved his third night Abschuss (and second confirmed victory), over an Il-4 of 21 AP DD (50 AD DD), eight of which bombed Stalino central airfield in the mid-evening. 34 years later, he recorded: *According to my diary it was on 23.6.43 that I was dispatched to Stalino along with a second crew, to hunt there by night. On 24.6 the airfield was bombed while I was in the air. I shot down a DB-3. However, owing to the damage to the airfield I had to divert to Saporoshje*.

Oblt. Bertram and his He111 crew took off from Seschtschinskaja at 21.38 hrs for their 112th *Feindflug*, a Nachtjagd patrol in the Brjansk-Karatsjev area. They returned to their home base at 23.45 hrs with claims for two Red Air Force bombers destroyed. Their first victim, a PS-84 of the 3 AP DD, was shot down by Bertram's *Bordfunker* Ofw. Heinz Schewe and hit the ground 30 km north of Dmitrovsk-Orlovski with the loss of 2nd Lt. Novozhilov and his crew; their second quarry, a four-engined Antonov An-6 (TB-3) was dispatched by Bertram himself.

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| Ofw. Fritz Müller: 2 | 10.(NJ)/ZG1 | DB-3 | city edge Stalino: 2.300 m. | 21.18 | 21 AP DD Il-4 |
| Oblt. Günter Bertram: 11 | NJ Schwarm LF6 | PS-84 | 25 km SE Karatsjev (5312) | 22.47 | 3 AP DD PS-84 serial nr. 1843901 |
| Oblt. Günter Bertram: 12 | NJ Schwarm LF6 | TB-3 | SE Karatsjev | 22.59 | unidentified |

## 29-30 June 1943

Oblt. Bertram of the He111-equipped NJ Schwarm of Luftflotte 6 took off from Seschtschinskaja at 21.38 hrs for his 116th *Feindflug*, a routine a night fighting sortie in the Brjansk-Orel area. 16 minutes before the Heinkel returned to its home airfield, the crew's *Bordfunker* Ofw. Heinz Schewe claimed an R-5 destroyed.

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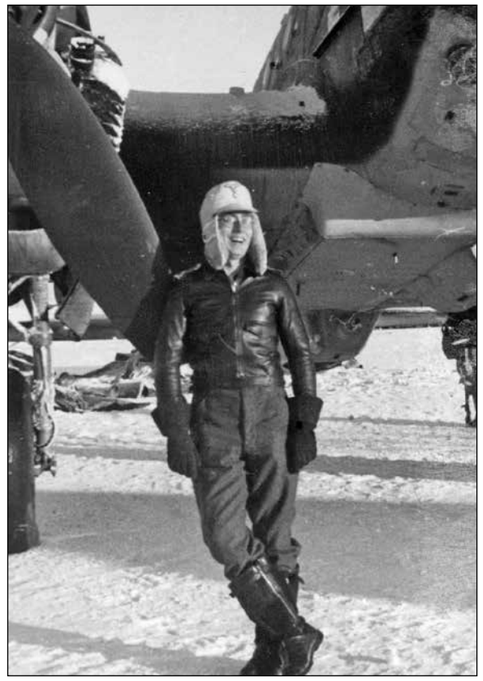
| Oblt. Günter Bertram: 13 | NJ Schwarm LF6 | R-5 | nr. Konchino, 30 km NNW Djatkowo (34462) | 22.55 | unidentified |

In the summer of 1943, NJG100, a new Nachtjagd Geschwader for night fighting on the *Ostfront*, was formed. Its first Gruppe was established when IV./NJG5, under the command of Hptm. Heinrich Prinz zu Sayn-Wittgenstein and operating in the central sector of the Eastern Front (in the area of Luftflotte 6), was officially re-named I./NJG100 on 1 August 1943. (A 4. Staffel was established in I./NJG100 in early December 1943). Even though only few Nachtjäger of IV./NJG5 were equipped with the *Lichtenstein* airborne radar yet, the Gruppe shot down 48 Russian aircraft during the July 1943 Kursk offensive, which amounted to some 8% of the Soviet night bomber force employed during the Kursk battle. Prinz zu Sayn-Wittgenstein destroyed 19 of these, including seven on a single night, on 24-25 July. During this period, 10. and 12./NJG5 operated in the Orel area, whilst the 11. Staffel was active in the Charkow region. The Nachtjäger operated at heights of over 600 metres; below this height, the light Flak had a free range of fire. In the areas where Nachtjagd was in progress, the heavy Flak was strictly forbidden to open fire.

The *(Nah)nachtjagd Schwärme* on the Eastern Front were all re-named and incorporated into a second newly formed Nachtjagd Geschwader for night fighting in the East, NJG200, in July-August 1943. NJG200 was officially established on 17 August 1943, but no official Gruppen were formed within this Geschwader, only Staffeln. These Staffeln were simply created by renaming several small *Nachtjagdschwärme*. 1./NJG200, for example, was the renamed NJSchw. of Luftflotte 1, which had a He111 H, three Ju88 C-6s and three Me110 Cs on strength. The motley collection of aircraft that was inherited from the NJSchw. days (Bf110, Ju88 A-4 and C-6, Fw190, and even three He111 H-20s) were used by the 1., 4., 5. and 7. Staffeln of NJG200 in *Helle Nachtjagd* fashion and during the moonlight periods. In the central sector of the *Ostfront*, 7. and 8./NJG200 were active, whereas the first three Staffeln of NJG200 was established to take up the night air defense in the northern sector, and the Staffeln 4.-6. of NJG200 became responsible for the Nachtjagd in the southern sector.



**Ofw. Heinz Schewe, *Bordfunker* to Oblt. Bertram in the *Nachtjagd Schwarm* of Luftflotte 6, was one of the very few operational aircrew in the Luftwaffe wearing glasses. Schewe destroyed three Russian night bombers during the first half of 1943, and achieved another 25 *Abschussbeteiligungen* with Bertram in 4./NJG100 during 1943-45 (Coll. Günter Bertram).**