

# THE 'GREY' WAR

## THE

# 'GREY' WAR

A message was received by German radio stations from a Junkers Ju 88 on a patrol from Denmark. The wireless operator reported that one of the engines was on fire and that the aircraft was going to ditch into the North Sea. This seemingly unexceptional incident has been the subject of much controversy over the succeeding years as the Ju 88 did not crash, but landed entirely intact in the UK. It is now on permanent display at the RAF Museum Hendon.

On the afternoon of Sunday, 9 May 1943, two Spitfires from 165 (Ceylon) Squadron's Blue Section were scrambled from RAF Dyce to intercept a lone Junkers Ju 88 that had been plotted heading across the North Sea. Shortly after making landfall some thirteen miles north-west of Aberdeen, in good visibility the German aircraft encountered a pair of Spitfires – BN515 flown by American pilot Flight Lieutenant A.F. Roscoe DFC (Blue 1) and AB921 with Canadian Sergeant B.R. Scamen (Blue 2). No shots were fired and the two RAF fighters proceeded to escort the Ju 88 peacefully to RAF Dyce where it landed at 18.20 hours.

Why did the Spitfires not engage the enemy intruder? Why did the Ju 88 land apparently voluntarily at an RAF airfield?

Possibly it was a case that the crew had become lost, or that the three Germans on board were deserters who felt they could no longer fight for the Third Reich. Or, as some have suggested, was the entire episode in fact a carefully planned

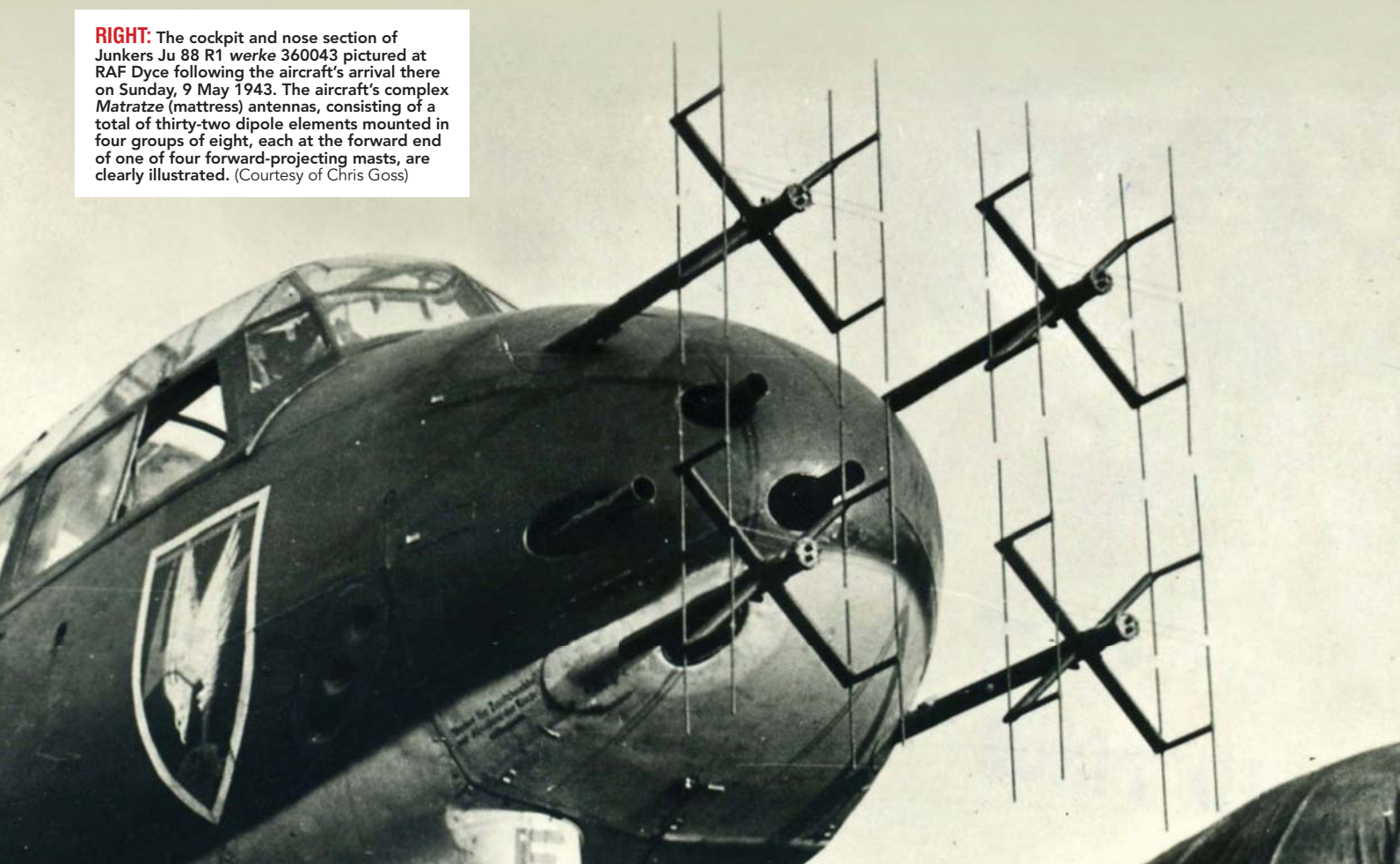
and top secret British operation?

The Junkers Ju 88 R1 had taken off from Aalborg in Denmark at 15.03 hours. Flown by *Oberleutnant* Heinrich Schmitt (Pilot),<sup>1</sup> *Oberfeldwebel* Erich Kantwill (Flight Engineer) and *Oberfeldwebel* Paul Rosenberger (Wireless Op/Air Gunner), the Ju 88, from IV Gruppe of *Nachtjagdgeschwader* 3 (NJG.3 – a night fighter wing) and coded D5+EV, landed at Kristiansand in Norway for refuelling exactly one hour later. The night fighter took off again at 16.50 hours for a mission over the Skagerrak.

Following the call from the aircraft's Wireless Operator reporting engine trouble, nothing more was heard from the crew again. It was presumed by the *Luftwaffe* that the aircraft had been lost at sea.

The entry for that day in the 165 Squadron Diary reads as follows: "Arthur Roscoe and Ben Scamen were scrambled today to investigate a raider plotted due east of Peterhead. The raider turned south

**RIGHT:** The cockpit and nose section of Junkers Ju 88 R1 *werke* 360043 pictured at RAF Dyce following the aircraft's arrival there on Sunday, 9 May 1943. The aircraft's complex *Matratze* (mattress) antennas, consisting of a total of thirty-two dipole elements mounted in four groups of eight, each at the forward end of one of four forward-projecting masts, are clearly illustrated. (Courtesy of Chris Goss)





**ABOVE:** Flight Lieutenant Arthur Roscoe DFC. (Courtesy of Chris Goss)

**ABOVE RIGHT:** Sergeant Ben Scamen is seen here, on the left, with another unknown airman. (Courtesy of Chris Goss)

**RIGHT:** A picture of *Oberfeldwebel* Erich Kantwell. Having steadfastly refused to cooperate with Schmitt and Rosenburger, Kantwell spent the rest of the war in Allied prisoner of war camps. After the war, Kantwell initially returned to his home in Dortmund, eventually emigrating to Canada before moving across the border into the USA. (Courtesy of Andy Saunders)

**BELOW:** Supermarine Spitfire Vbs of 165 Squadron. Reforming on 6 April 1942 at RAF Ayr, Scotland, the squadron became operational on defensive duties on 1 May that year. It moved to RAF Eastchurch, Kent, on 15 August to take part in sweeps over northern France, moving to RAF Gravesend on 20 August and again to RAF Tangmere on 2 November 1942. The squadron arrived at RAF Peterhead, Scotland, on 29 March 1943, from where detachments were posted to Dyce. (Courtesy of Chris Goss)

and eventually started to orbit as though lost. The section identified the raider as a Ju 88 and when Arthur approached, the Hun dropped his undercart, shot off Very lights and wagged his wings. Blue 1 wagged his wings in turn and positioned himself in front of the enemy aircraft – Ben Scamen flew above and behind and the procession moved off to Dyce aerodrome



where all landed safely causing a major sensation."<sup>2</sup>

"I was flying Blue 1 when we were scrambled to intercept an 'X' raid said to be 15 miles east of Peterhead travelling west at 0 feet," Flight Lieutenant Roscoe later wrote. "We were vectored 030° and I flew at very high speed in order to intercept before bandit reached coast.

"When about half way to Peterhead, we were told the bandit was flying south about 5 miles out to sea. We turned east and flew out to sea for a few minutes and then orbited as bandit was reported due north of us going south. We were then told to come closer in shore and orbit. We were then told bandit was west of us and orbiting so I flew slightly NNW so I could see to port.

"I then saw bandit about 1 mile inland on my port bow at about 300-400 feet. I approached from his starboard beam and noticed his wheels were down and he fired numerous red Very lights. I identified it as a Ju 88.

"He wagged his wings and I answered him back so I presumed he wished to be led to an aerodrome. I positioned myself about 400 yards ahead of him and told Blue 2 to fly above and behind and to one side of bandit. The 88 raised his wheels and followed me back to Dyce.

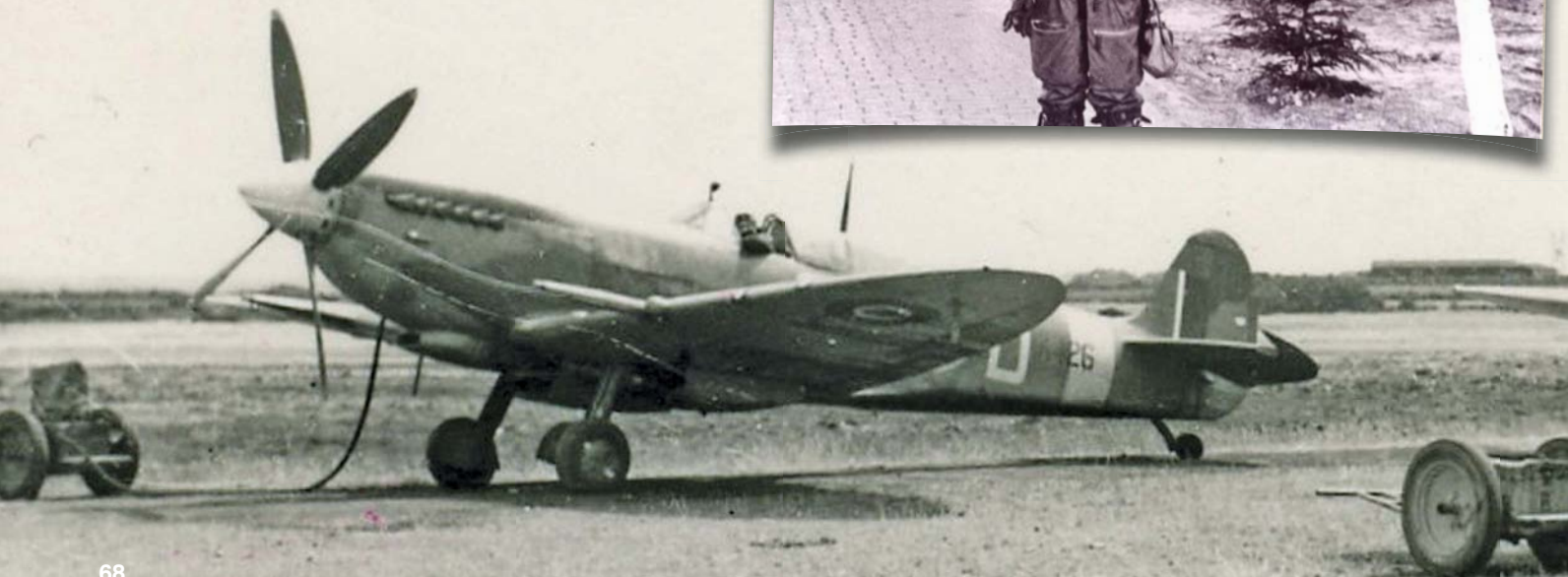
Upon reaching the aerodrome he lowered his wheels, fired more red lights, did a short circuit and landed. I followed him around during his complete run-in just out of range. We then pancaked."<sup>3</sup>

This certainly does not sound like a pre-arranged event yet the Ju 88 was fitted with the new FuG

202 Lichtenstein B/C radar equipment. RAF losses to night fighters over Occupied Europe and Germany were reaching unacceptable levels and much of the German success was due to the effectiveness of its radar. To be handed one of these Lichtenstein sets intact was a welcome bonus to the Telecommunications Research Establishment in Malvern. That three Germans had decided to defect with such a valuable gift at such a crucial time appeared to be almost too remarkable to be simply good luck.

In 1974, the German newspaper *Bild Am Sonntag* investigated the incident in which it alleged that Heinrich Schmitt had been a British agent since 1940. The newspaper claimed that Schmitt had regularly supplied secret information to Britain by way of his father, who sent it from his home in Thüringen via relay radio stations in Portugal and Switzerland.

According to the reports in *Bild Am Sonntag*, Schmitt had flown to the United Kingdom on at least one previous occasion before his arrival at Dyce. He





**ABOVE:** Junkers Ju 88 R-1 D5+EY pictured at RAF Dyce shortly after its landing on 9 May 1943. The night fighter insignia worn on all *Nachtjagdgeschwader 3* aircraft is prominently displayed on the starboard side of the fuselage. *NJG.3* was formed on 29 September 1941. At the time of this aircraft's arrival in the UK, *IV Gruppe* of *NJG.3* was commanded by Major Erich Simon. (Courtesy of Chris Goss)

had been chosen to deliver a package to a representative of the British High Command in 1941, landing a Dornier Do 217 at Lincoln during the night of 20/21 May. The landing lights had been turned on to guide him in. Schmitt allegedly handed over the package to a waiting British officer and then immediately took off and returned to Germany.

It is also believed that the successful arrival of the Ju 88 at Dyce was signalled to Schmitt's father via the British propaganda radio station "Gustav Seigfried Eins". The message that was broadcast was "May has come", which implies that this was a pre-arranged code.

To add some weight to the theory that Schmitt was working for the British, it had been noted by Helmut Fiedler, a former

German ground crew on the Ju 88, that it was most unusual that such a long-serving crew as Schmitt, Rosenberger and Kantwill had never made any interceptions of British aircraft and had never shot any Allied 'planes.

\*

The arrival of the Ju 88 at Dyce certainly did cause a sensation. Hardly had the German aircraft's wheels touched the ground than people were writing

**"He wagged his wings and I answered him back so I presumed he wished to be led to an aerodrome."**

or telephoning their friends with the astonishing news.

"A Jerry 'plane landed the other night, surrendered, and I had the job of driving the prisoners to the guardroom," wrote a WAAF called Ethel who worked in the airfield's Motor Transport section, "but they were all dressed up in evening dress under their flying kit."

Another WAAF at Dyce, Helen, who worked in the station's Met Office, wrote,

"I shouldn't be telling you this, so keep your thumb on it or I'll get shot – we were aroused by Florence yelling through the door 'Air raid warning red' ... we looked out, Maisie said, 'Oh, it's only a Mosquito', when off went the Ack-Ack ... shepherded by the new fighter flight, the thing came in and landed ... and out stepped three Jerries complete – and I think this is pukka gen – with despatch case."

According to a WAAF called Isabel, "The siren went in camp and we were told that one enemy aircraft was approaching the camp ... when to our surprise we saw the two fighters coming back escorting another 'plane which was dropping flares ... Then he was directly above us, it was then we saw the black crosses on





**ABOVE:** The Ju 88 pictured at Dyce having been moved under cover at the request of R.V. Jones. When the time came for the aircraft to be flown from Dyce to RAE Farnborough, Schmitt offered to pilot the aircraft himself. Whilst R.V. Jones was "convinced that the German pilot could be trusted to fly the nightfighter for us", the RAF aircrew that had been tasked with undertaking the transfer refused the offer. (Courtesy of Chris Goss)

**BELOW:** A frontal view of Junkers Ju 88 D5+EY shortly after its arrival at RAF Dyce. During June and July 1943, the aircraft completed seven night flights during which mock combats were carried out against a Handley Page Halifax. (Courtesy of Andy Saunders)

it ... Then another surprise, he put his wheels down to land. Imagine, land on our 'drome! Then a voice came over the loudspeakers warning the Ack-Ack batteries not to fire on the 'plane coming in ... Anyway we, the three of us, got right up to the kite and three live Jerries got out grinning all over their faces ... The excitement was terrific. But after all, it isn't every day a Ju 88 lands on the 'drome, is it?"

To Leading Aircraftwoman K.H. Paterson, also serving in the Met Office, the incident had all the appearance of a "planned escape", because "the Spits did not give a shot and there was nothing wrong with its engine".<sup>4</sup>

These letters were amongst 2,578 letters checked by a mail and telephone interception team which was quickly

established to prevent news of the arrival of the Ju 88 leaking out. Of those communications intercepted – and which never reached their intended destination – more than 400 contained eye-witness accounts of the landing and twenty-four were confiscated.

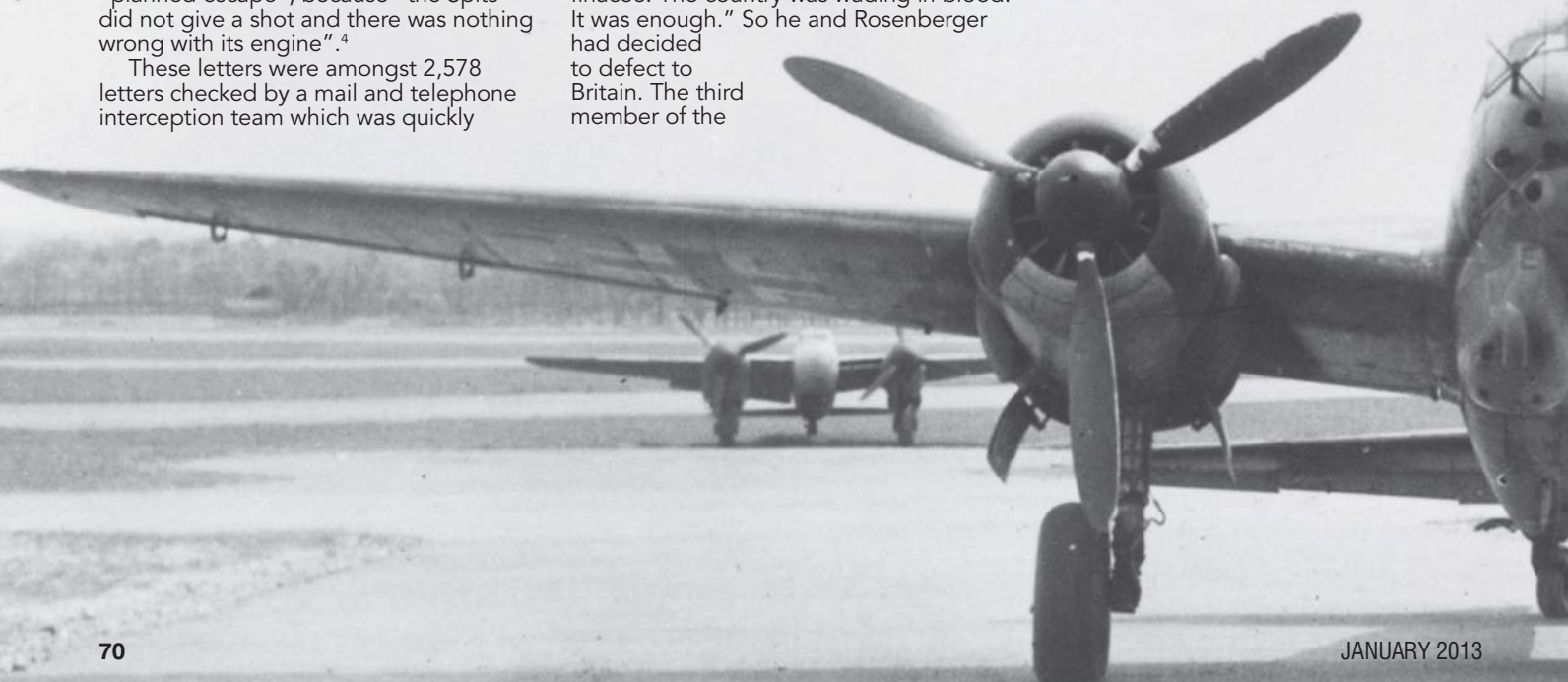
According to the scientist R.V. Jones, who led the British counter-radar effort, the German crew said that "they had little sympathy with the Nazis, and that when they had received orders to shoot down our civil courier flying between Scotland and Stockholm, it was time for them to get out of the war. So during a normal sortie they signalled that they had an engine failure and were losing height: in fact they dived down to sea level to get below the German radar cover, and then headed for Aberdeen. They were detected by our radar, and intercepted by two Spitfires from a Canadian squadron who recognised that their intentions were not offensive, who took the risk of escorting them over Aberdeen and into Dyce."<sup>5</sup>

Schmitt later confirmed this by declaring that: "I had seen enough with my own eyes how things stood for us. The oppression, the deaths on the battlefields, the murder of my Jewish fiancée. The country was wading in blood. It was enough." So he and Rosenberger had decided to defect to Britain. The third member of the

crew, *Oberfeldwebel* Erich Kantwill, had not wanted to desert to the enemy but the other two gave him no choice, Rosenberger having held him at gunpoint during the flight to Scotland.

Following his arrival at Dyce, Jones' immediate concern was that the enemy might learn that the Ju 88 had landed intact. Jones had the Ju 88 hidden in a hangar out of sight of German reconnaissance aircraft. Then, to stop the personnel at Dyce from talking openly about the aircraft, Jones decided to give a lecture to everyone on the base about the importance of radar. Though this was a risky strategy, it evidently worked and a degree of secrecy was maintained.

The acquisition of the Lichtenstein radar was highly significant. The Ju 88 was quickly repainted in RAF colours and aerial trials with the new radar were conducted by the Telecommunications Research Establishment (TRE) which was headed by Jones. The trials noted the radar's effectiveness as well as highlighting its deficiencies. For example, one subsequent TRE report on the Lichtenstein equipment stated that "efficient and quick interception is possible only by a fighter which has been





vectored to within 30° of its target".<sup>6</sup>

The evaluation work on the captured radar set also paved the way for 'Window', the anti-radar system which had been developed much earlier but not introduced into the aerial war for the fear that it would soon be copied by the Germans and in so doing 'blind' Britain's own radar network.

After evaluating the Lichtenstein radar agreement was reached that Window could at last be used. On the night of 24 July 1943, fifty tons of Window were dropped over a considerable distance from twenty miles west of Heligoland all the way to Hamburg. Altogether 112,000 bundles of the aluminium-coated paper slips were dropped which gave the same radar effect as 112,000 aircraft. The Germans had no idea what was happening. Window proved to be an enormous success and cut dramatically Allied combat losses.

As well as delivering an intact Ju 88, Schmitt and Rosenberger contributed further to the Allied war effort. The two men became regular broadcasters on Gustav Seigfried Eins which was broadcast to Germany at 16:00 hours each day. "The war is lost," Schmitt told his countrymen but under an assumed name, "don't sacrifice your

lives for a futile war and incompetent leaders. In England and Sweden there are airfields where you will be welcomed as we were. Remember – waggle the wings of your aircraft, and you will be escorted in to a safe landing."

With Window proving so effective at jamming the German radar, the Luftwaffe adopted new techniques, such as permitting their night fighters to roam the skies independently, giving their crews a running commentary by radio on where it was thought that the British bombers were heading. To counter this, a high-power ground radio transmitter (known as Corona) was built and was controlled from the British listening station at Kingsdown. This operated on the same frequency as the German radios. Schmitt, Rosenberg, and other German speakers, would communicate their own messages to the German night fighter crews to confuse them. They would listen to the advice being given to the German pilots and then send contradictory instructions of their own. The German pilots did not know who to believe.

In one incident, on the night of 17 November 1943, the Corona operator

issued a general instruction to all night fighters to land immediately. This they did, despite the protests of the genuine German radio operator!

**"The excitement was terrific. But after all, it isn't every day a Ju 88 lands on the 'drome, is it?"**

**ABOVE LEFT:** Oberleutnant Heinrich Schmitt's Ju 88 pictured in RAF markings. The British serial number PJ876 was allocated to the aircraft on 17 May 1943. It is known that a photograph of the Ju 88 was taken at Farnborough the following day by which point the night fighter was already adorned with RAF roundels and minus its Matratze (mattress) antennas. (Courtesy of Andy Saunders)

**ABOVE RIGHT:** Junkers Ju 88 R-1 D5+EY pictured at Biggin Hill in September 1965. The aircraft has arrived there in 1960, remaining until June 1967 when he was transported by road to RAF Henlow in Bedfordshire for possible use in the film *Battle of Britain*, which, in the event, did not happen. (Courtesy of Andy Saunders)

**BELOW:** This view of the Dyce Ju 88, still minus its Matratze (mattress) antennas, was taken in 1966. Between 25 May 1943, and the end of that year, the Ju 88 completed eighty-three test flights totalling nearly sixty-seven hours. (Courtesy of Chris Goss)



## THE 'GREY' WAR

As for the Ju 88, it left Dyce on 14 May 1943, escorted by a force of Beaufighters. It was eventually transferred to the RAF Museum at Hendon for inclusion in the Battle of Britain Hall which opened in November 1978. There it remains to this day.

Both Flight Lieutenant Roscoe and Sergeant B.R. Scamen were acknowledged for their involvement in the safe arrival of the Ju 88. "The pilots are to be congratulated for not opening fire and so bringing home valuable information for the technical branch," noted the 165 Squadron Operations Record Book.<sup>7</sup> R.V. Jones was also aware of the part that these two pilots had played. "One of my more diverting efforts on returning to London was to try and get the two Canadians [sic] awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for not shooting the Germans aircraft down. This was asking rather too much of the Air Staff, but they did finally agree that the pilots should be Mentioned in Despatches."<sup>8</sup>

What, then, are we to make of that mysterious day in May 1943? Well we do have Schmitt's own words on the subject from the interview he gave to *Bild Am Sonntag*. He explained that his father was a long-standing enemy of National

Socialism and had been the secretary to Gustav Stressemann, the Foreign Minister in the former Weimar Republic. He had kept in touch with the Social Democrats that had escaped to London.

He admitted to having landed at RAF Lincoln in 1941. The date was just ten days after another mysterious flight over Britain – that which saw Rudolf Hess bale out of his Messerschmitt Bf 110 over Scotland.

"It was all part of the grey war that existed at that time," Schmitt said. "I wasn't the only German pilot to land, by arrangement in Britain, and several British pilots made landings in Germany, which were known to the people who mattered on our side. It was well-known that Hitler was prepared to pay a high price to make peace with Britain, and the secret flights only ended when we attacked Russia, and Britain and Russia became allies."<sup>9</sup> According to Schmitt, the landing at Lincoln was on behalf of the *Luftwaffe*, but what the package was that he handed to the waiting British officer, Schmitt never knew.

Exactly what secret messages were passed between the UK and Germany in those early days of the war is still to be uncovered. Maybe they are the last great secrets of the Second World War? ■



**BOTTOM:** Junkers Ju 88 R-1 D5+EY at the RAF Museum Hendon. During the build-up to the D-Day landings, the aircraft was operated by the RAF's No.1426 (Enemy Aircraft) Flight, nicknamed "The Rafwaffe", and was used to provide various Allied units with experience in enemy aircraft recognition. (Photograph by Iain Duncan; © Trustees of the RAF Museum, Hendon)

**FAR LEFT:** The crew entry hatch on D5+EY photographed in the open position. After the war Heinrich Schmitt returned to Germany. Using his own name, he married and was found work with the Social Democrats. Paul Rosenburger, who had used the name Obermeyer in his BBC broadcasts, also returned to Germany, but only briefly. He established a new life and a new identity, at which point, according to some accounts, he settled in France. Other sources state that he ran a hotel and restaurant in Wiltshire. (Photograph by Iain Duncan; © Trustees of the RAF Museum, Hendon)

**LEFT:** The view looking down the rear fuselage of D5+EY from the direction of the aircraft's bomb bay. (Photograph by Iain Duncan; © Trustees of the RAF Museum, Hendon)

**BELOW LEFT:** Junkers Ju 88 R-1 D5+EY arrived at the RAF Museum Hendon on 14 August 1978. It remains on display there to this day – as seen here. (Photograph by Iain Duncan; © Trustees of the RAF Museum, Hendon)

### NOTES:

1. Some accounts state that Schmitt's first name was Herbert.
2. DoRIS Ref. AC91/8/23, quoted in the RAF Museum's history of the Dyce Junkers Ju 88.
3. TNA, AIR/50/68, "personal report" by Flight Lieutenant A.F. Roscoe DFC. A number of accounts state that during the Ju 88's landing it was fired upon by Dyce's anti-aircraft defences, though these reports disagree on whether the German night fighter was actually hit.
4. These letters are quoted in Robert Hill, *The Great Coup* (Corgi, London, 1977, pp.80-86).
5. R.V. Jones, *Most Secret War* (Hamish Hamilton, London, 1978), p.327.
6. Brian Johnson, *The Secret War* (Arrow Books, London, 1978), p.133.
7. TNA, AIR 27/1087, 165 Squadron Operations Record Book April 1942-July 1946.
8. R.V. Jones, *op. cit.*, p.327.
9. Hill, *op. cit.*, pp.170-1.

