

With the expulsion of the Germans from Ploesti, it was learned from the refinery people that special gasoline that had been sent to Moosbierbaum was to be used as aviation fuel. Another fact was brought out by 15th Airforce Flak Section that the number of guns increased from six on the first attack to 50 on 12 August, and by late August there was an increase to 76, and on five September the amount peaked at 89 guns.

On three October the Enemy Oil Intelligence Committee reported that equipment forwarded to Moosbierbaum from French refineries included a light oil redistillation unit, stabilization unit, storage tanks and pipe line. The erection of this equipment in the north area of the plant was watched with great interest. 15th AF continued to attack and the enemy continued vigorously to repair. By 11 December the enemy added a new defense. A smoke screen was laid so effectively that PFF bombing had to be used. The importance of the plant to the enemy was now clearly indicated.

With successful attacks against refinery targets everywhere else, Moosbierbaum was left as the most important target within 15th AF range at the end of January, 1945. Moosbierbaum was attacked on 31 January, and 1 February with scattered hits throughout the north area. The plant was inactive at the time of photography.

A Maximum Effort was planned for Moosbierbaum an important target for the reasons stated, but the 484th BG was to be plagued with a ground accident that delayed planned rendezvous with other bomb groups and fighter escorts, reducing the size of the attacking forces. In many missions flown by the 484th Bomb Group two attacking units comprised of six combat boxes A through E. were employed. Lead aircraft were assigned in the Able 11 position with his deputy lead in the Able 12 position. The second attack unit Dog 11 carried the second lead and his deputy was in Dog 12. Fox flight was not assigned. These positions were flown by pathfinder aircraft (PFF)

Yanney in Dog 11 in ship 202 leading the second attack unit has to abort partially blocking a taxi way and runway. Howell in Dog 12 in ship 200 second deputy lead takes off followed by Gaskill in position Dog 13 in ship 27 R with a photographer on board. Further take offs are held up while Yanney's aircraft is removed from the runway delaying the deployment of Easy flight that is forced to fly with the 461st Bomb Group. Howell and Gaskill speed up to catch the first attack unit lead by Major Dufour of Ploesti fame who is on his second tour of combat duty. Thus the rest of Dog flight is held up to join the 461st in its raid on the first alternate target, Pola Navy yard.

The Operations Order that came down from group the night before call for a maximum effort with the 484th to lead followed by the 451st, and the 461st, Major Dufour leader. Bombing altitudes were set at 484th-24,000, 451st-25,000, 461st-26,000 feet. Bomb load, 500lb GP bombs fused nose .1 and mixed tail .01 & .025 delay (parts of a second).

Bombing by the synchronized method was to be employed if the target was obscured, that is the radar navigator worked in conjunction with the bombardier. All units were to dispense carpet (thin tinfoil strips) three minutes before the IP. The first alternate was Pola Navy yard, which the 461st combined with 484th elected to bomb because of the take off delay. The specific part of the Moosbierbaum Refinery that was the immediate target was defended by 90 guns alone.

More opposition was the 335 guns in the Vienna area SE of

the target, 248 guns in the Linz area west of the target. Rally off the target was to be slight left.

At briefing they were told that 40 to 50 fighters of Me-109s and FW-190s could be expected depending on how many were committed to defend the Russian front. This was not going to be a milk run.

The target area was one and a half miles North Northeast of the town of Moosbierbaum, 22 miles West Northwest of the center of Vienna. The new refinery bordered on the south bank of the Danube. Moosbierbaum was at this point in the war still in operation and was the focal point of air attacks because the Silesian refineries and the ones at Brux were already heavily damaged. The enemies store of petroleum products was at crisis level, hence the urgency for maximum efforts to destroy Moosbierbaum.

Abbreviations and Terms appearing in this report are:

1) f denotes camera onboard to record bomb strikes. 2) The two number code after the pilots name denotes nose number of the aircraft, 3) The bold letter (T) denote the aircraft looking down on the formation, 4) The letter after the nose number denotes the radio call channel, Three digit nose number denotes Mickey ship, bombing radar or PFF. Pilots name in capital letters indicates lead crews. DNT denotes "did not take off." ER denotes "early return"

Below is a reconstruction of what the formation probably looked like on 1 February 1945 just before take off. Of those Able 13 Bolton DNT because one turbosupercharger was inoperative. Rounds in Able 23 DNT because of fouled spark plugs all four engines & one runaway turbo. Owsley in Baker 11 returns early (ER) at 1235 with #3 engine feathered, and damaged beyond repair It will need an engine change. Vance in Charlie 13 RE at 1322 #3 feathered a/c lost all oil, and Konop in Charlie 23 RE at 0925 #2 feathered landed hard and the nose wheel collapsed. Yanney in D11 did not take off because the nose wheel was locked at 9 degrees making it impossible to control the plane and to prevent the retraction of the nose wheel. Dog 13 Gaskill who followed Howell after Yanney was stuck reported #1 cylinders temperature gage inoperative and many other gages inoperative causing a shortcut back to base to return at 1549. Of the other aircraft of Dog Flight to take off late and bomb with the 461st, Dog 21 Reichal RE #1 engine feathered a/c High oil temp and low oil pressure. The 484th could not put up a full complement of aircraft due to these mechanical problems and a shortage of serviceable aircraft.

Dana Stewart in Baker 23, and Kennedy in Baker 31 stood down because of the aircraft shortage. Howell was flying #41-28890 when he abandoned ship near Pecks, Yugoslavia.

