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Sincere thanks are also extended to Barbara and Colin Huston for reviewing our English text.

We would especially like to thank the late Yugoslav, German and US aviators and their families, both those that we had the privilege to meet or contact in person as well as those known by our friends and colleagues, foremost Dušan Božović, Boris Cijan, Pavle Crnjanski, Mile Ćurgus, Milan Delić, Zlatko Dimčović, Stanislav Džodžović, Franc Godec, Milutin Grozdanović, Josip Helebrant, Aleksandar Janković, Vukadin Jelić, Bruno Južnić, Tomislav Kauzlarić, Đorđe Kešeljević, Božidar Kostić, Dragoslav Krstić, Otmar Lajh, Slavko Lampe, Kosta Lekić, Mihajlo Nikolić, Miloš Maksimović, Radenko Malešević, Ivan Masnec, Borivoje Marković, Borislav Milojević, Dobrivoje Milovanović, Dragoljub Milošević, Ivan Padovan, Milutin Petrov, Svetozar Petrović, Miladin Romić, Josip Rupčić, Milisav Semiz, Milan Skendžić, Albin Starc, Zlatko Stipčić, Đorđe Stojanović, Alojz Šeruga, Boško Šuković, Franjo Tudurić, Milisav Velikić, Nikola Vučković, Milan Žunjić, Miloš Žunjić, Ernst Georg Altnorthof, Hans-Ekkehard Bob, Hans Deuschle, Heino Emmerstorfer, Richard Hausmann, Armin Köhler, Emil Omert, Karl Rammelt, August Rohlfs, Georg Schirmböck, Günther Scholz, Walter Seiz, Günther Tschertner, Wilhelm Westhoff, Helmut Vogel, James Hare and Richard Munsen.

Finally, this work would not have been possible without the historical heritage that we managed to find in numerous institutions, foremost Vojni arhiv (Military Archive), Muzej vazduhoplovstva - Beograd (Belgrade Aviation Museum), Muzej ratnog vazduhoplovstva (Air Force Museum), Vojni muzej (Military Museum), Biblioteka grada Beograda (Belgrade City Library), Arhiv Srpske akademije nauka i umetnosti (Archive of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts) and Narodna biblioteka Srbije (Serbian National Library) in Serbia, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek (Austrian National Library) in Austria, Muzej novejše zgodovine (Museum of Contemporary History) in Slovenia, Bundesarchiv Militärarchiv (Federal Military Archive) in Germany, The National Archives of the United Kingdom, National Archives and Records Administration and Air Force Historical Research Agency in the United States, Archivio Centrale dello Stato in Italy, and Muzej revolucije naroda Hercegovine (Museum of the Revolution of the People of Herzegovina) in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The sources we had to hand often could not provide a clear and complete image of all that happened. We have tried to present as realistic a picture of the events as possible, without embellishment, distortion or hiding of facts, yet we cannot rule out that in some instances too much trust was given to some of the sources, whilst some facts might have been misinterpreted or even completely omitted. We are not claiming to present the ultimate historical truth and sincerely hope that this won't be the last work on this subject, moreover it is intended to be a helpful asset for further research in this field. Accordingly, we look forward to any new data that could question some of the conclusions and assumptions presented on the pages that follow.

The 6 April this year will mark 75 years since the beginning of the invasion on what was once Yugoslavia. As the remaining survivors leave us incontinently at an alarming rate and the historic memory of the Second World War fades away, this is an attempt to preserve from oblivion a fragment of the remembrance of young men who tamed some of the best fighting machines in harsh times, the most tragic and horrid in the history of mankind. We hope that our effort won't be in vain.

Belgrade, 20 January 2016,

Boris Ciglić, Dragan Savić, Milan Micevski & Predrag Miladinović

# Chapter 1

## Royal Emils

### The Land of the South Slavs

A creation of the Versailles Treaty, the Yugoslav Kingdom (by **1929** officially named the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes) was a country of many discrepancies. Intended to be ruled by the Serbian King Aleksandar Karađorđević and assembled from the Kingdom of Serbia, the Kingdom of Montenegro and south-eastern Austro-Hungarian territories populated by the Slovenes, Croats and Serbs, it quickly became apparent that the new creation did not have the capacity to become a melting pot for the different culture, history and religion of its peoples. Constant social and ethnic divisions between its two major nations, Serbs and Croats, an undeveloped economy, corrupted and inefficient state apparatus, political violence and restrictions of rights, led to open dictatorship in

**1929**. Yet, at the same time on a broader perspective, the Kingdom became the key player in the Balkans. Backed by France, the young state developed a well equipped army, capable of holding its own in any possible conflict with its neighbors. Furthermore, the mutual defense agreement with Czechoslovakia and Romania, the so-called 'Petit Entente', was effectively holding at bay any attempt at revisionism from Austria, Hungary and Bulgaria. Indeed, it was not the old adversaries from the Great War that posed a major threat to the South Slavic Kingdom, but the former ally Italy, which felt cheated simply by its emergence and the loss of the Eastern Adriatic Coast and Austrian Littoral, which it considered its natural and historical territories. Tensions between the two countries remained high and on occasions in the twenties almost turned into an armed conflict.



**The Kosovo Cross, insignia of the Royal Yugoslav air arm since 1924, on the wing of a Messerschmitt Bf 109E-3a.**  
*(Family of Đorđe Kešeljević)*





After a refueling stop at Wiener Neustadt, kap Ilk Miha Klavora is ready to continue towards Zemun on 19 October 1939. Born in Maribor in 1905, Klavora finished pilot training in 1927. A much liked figure, he was holding the position of deputy commander of 103.E at the time of the German invasion.  
(Šime Oštrić Collection)

The long-awaited contract for delivery of 100 fighters, worth 16,900,000 RM, spare parts for 2,000,000 RM, and 13 Taifun trainers, was finally signed by the appointee of Messerschmitt AG and arm den Janković on **23 October**. A request by VVKJ representatives to expand their orders for a further 100 Bf 109s, 30 Bf 110s, 31 Ju 87s and 50 Hs 126s was duly noted by ambassador von Heeren and passed over to Berlin, but, as time would prove, nothing came of it.



Regensburg, December 1939: Bf 109E-3 W.Nr.2370 taxis for its maiden flight. It has no wing armament, but has the bulge for the Oerlikon cannon drum built in.  
(Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna)



Regensburg, 19 October 1939: with his parachute strapped on, nvtč IVk Pantelija Grandić is about to enter 'D-IYYJ'. In April 1941 Grandić served in 163.E. On 8 April 1941 he flew the only combat mission ever made with the LVT-1 bastard fighter and crash-landed after its DB 601Aa seized. He died in Banja Luka on 28 April 1988.  
(Milan Micevski)

On **1 November** test pilot Mühlenhausen took-off from Prüfening for a test of a Yugoslav Emil. Whilst breaking through the clouds, he struck the ground near Sinzing and perished. A week or two later ten mechanics, among them Ivan Masnec, Đorđe Gajić, Marko Lozić, Božidar Predragović, Koroš, Duško Petrović, Đorđe Kulić and Miladin Romić, lead by ing. Borislav Petrović went to Germany and spent a month and a half in gaining skills for handling the new equipment,



Minutes later, it zooms over Regensburg airfield. Despite its Balkenkreuz, W.Nr.2370 is thought to have been one of the aircraft delivered to the Yugoslav Kingdom.  
(Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna)



Bf 109E-3s in their final production phase prior to being delivered to the Luftwaffe next to a packed set of wings for a VVKJ Bf 109E-3a. The plane in the back carries W.Nr.2340 and is also among those thought to have been delivered to Yugoslavia.  
(Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna)



Bf 109E-3a 'L-37' is disassembled and prepared for transport to Yugoslavia via rail in late December 1939. This aircraft was allocated to 101.E and severely damaged in June 1940 at Veliki Radinci forward flying ground, when por Jevrem Bjelica tore-off its undercarriage while landing.  
(Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna)





Airmen of 6.LP in front of a Bf 109E-3a at Zemun, May 1940. From left: rez ppor Boris Cijan, por Mihajlo Nikolić, rez por Miloš Drakulić, kap Ilk Bratvoje Urošević, maj Ilija Milovanović, nar Savo Vujović, kap Ilk Boško Šuković, unknown NCO, unknown officer, nv Ilk Viktor Ulčar, rez kap Ilk Aleksandar Stanojević, kap Ilk Miloš Žunjić, unknown officer, and nv Ilk Karel Štrbenk.  
(Family of Mihajlo Nikolić)

the desired side of the turn and press the pedal, but it was always too short and insufficient for the push on the pedal. Only after a sort of torture I remembered to hold the foot controls in the middle and in this position I tried to brake with the wheel into desired direction, and I succeeded. So I learned how to taxi the plane. After this anguish I brought the plane to the start line. Once again, I interrogated myself in procedures, checked the instruments and



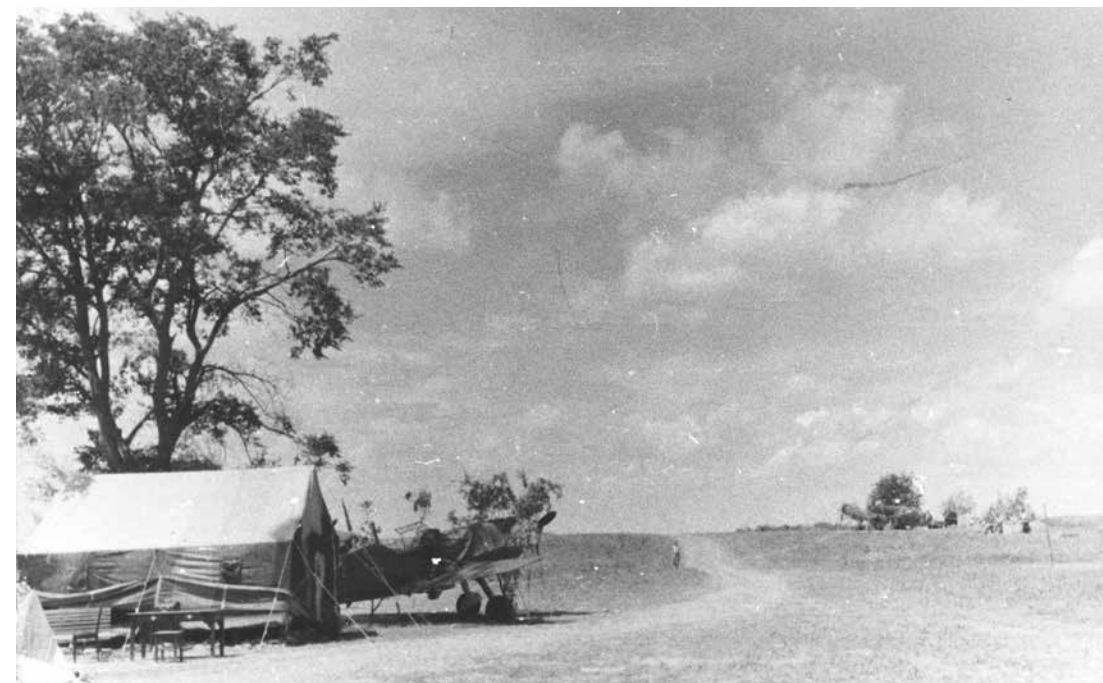
Ground crew of kap Ilk Josip Helebrant pose with his 'L-65' at Zemun. Helebrant commanded 16.AČ in April 1941 and did not fly any missions, but as a member of 15.(Kroat.)/JG 52 he went on to achieve 11 confirmed victories on the Eastern Front. He defected to the Yugoslav Partisans on 20 April 1945. He lived in Zagreb after the war and died on 10 December 1989.  
(Šime Oštrić Collection)

gave throttle for the take-off. After a longer run I noticed that the plane did not speed up, and the speed which it gained was not sufficient for lift-off. I checked the throttle handle which came back into the second third of the segment. A greater increase in speed raised the left wing from the ground and only by the energetic use of the foot controls I did not graze the ground with the right wing, then the take-off and what now, so I remembered that



Emils of 51.VG basking in the sun in Zemun, May 1940. All the aircraft carry white individual numbers and two have the Yugoslav tri-color removed from the rudder.  
(Šime Oštrić Collection)

After the mobilization of 6.LP in May 1940, one escadrille was kept constantly at Veliki Radinci and another at Crvena Crkva auxiliary airfields. Three Emils are concealed at the former flying ground, which didn't offer many hiding options.  
(Šime Oštrić Collection)



I should retract the wheels but unexpectedly the landing gear handle returned into the central position. I tried again but the result was the same, and the third and fourth time and somewhere far away on the Banat side of the Danube I gave up on further attempts. I reduced power and made a left turn, altitude is 1,000 meters, although the training circuit is usually done at the height of 300 meters. My plane was flying 450km/h.

When over the airfield I tried to lower the wheels and only then did I notice mechanical indicators moving into low position and then the green light. At that moment I screamed for joy in the cockpit (this attempt was accidental as, I was sure that the wheels had not gone up, so by chance I did the right thing, and if I hadn't done so I would have landed with wheels up). In all of this thinking I failed to take all the other actions which I was

supposed to (flaps, high pitch). After this first circuit, others were uneventful.<sup>10</sup>

On 20 May nar Semiz left Zemun and went to Veliki Radinci, near Ruma, where he joined 161.E. At the time, both 31. and 32.VG were alternately engaged on auxiliary airfields at Crvena Crkva, close to the Romanian border, and Veliki Radinci, in monthly shifts. It was then that the aviators of 6.LP got the first opportunity to test their skills with the new aircraft in aerial shooting at a drogue towed by a Breguet XIX over the range near Deliblato. The results were appalling: they were below average with the machine guns, and when it came to cannon fire, many failed to score at all. Although some pilots complained that, in contrast to the stable Hurricane, the wings jolted wildly when the FF-Ks were fired and that aiming

Surrounded by his ground crews, kap Ik Borivoje Marković, CO of 104.E, poses next to 'L-23', possibly at Crvena Crkva, where the escadrilles of 6.LP undertook gunnery practice. Marković claimed a Bf 110 on 6 April 1941 and later ended up in captivity.  
(Aleksandar Ognjević)







**Relaxed rez por Boris Cijan in front of his Bf 109E-3a at Krušedol. Although being one of the most experienced VVKJ pilots on the type, Cijan crashed on landing with one of these in March 1941. Shortly thereafter he was transferred from 104.E to the 2.LP HQ.** (Šime Oštrić Collection)

next day, his counterpart in Rome, ppuk Gavro Škrivanić, confirmed that the attack would commence on Sunday, **6 April**. The same data was received from puk Franc Stropnik, military attaché in Bucharest, and from the British on the **5th**. And in between, the top brass were living in a world of dreams. The newly appointed head of government, div den Dušan Simović, scheduled the wedding of his daughter for **6 April** and spent most of his time in preparations for the event. The driving force of the coup, brig den Borivoje Mirković, tried to persuade the British to provide military aid urgently, only to be told that the Yugoslav Kingdom could not count on any support in the near future.

On **3 April** the VVKJ suffered a serious blow from within, when kap Ik Vladimir Kren, a member of 'Ustasha' underground network, defected from Borongaj near Zagreb to Graz-Thalerhof and supplied the Germans with disposition plans of VVKJ units, locations of auxiliary airfields in the north of the country, and the cipher for radio communication. Together with data gathered by German intelligence on the ground and recce aircraft, active over Yugoslavia for some time already, it provided Luftwaffe command with knowledge unattainable even to many high ranking VVKJ officers.

During the day, ppuk Pirc took over the command of 2.LP, which consisted of 31.VG of maj Ilija Milovanović with

19 Bf 109E-3as at Sušičko Polje, and 52.VG of maj Miodrag Blagojević with 14 Mk.I Hurricanes at Kraljevo. Its zone of operation stretched over central Serbia, south of the line Požarevac - Mladenovac - Valjevo and, more importantly, it was supposed to support 6.LP in the defense of Belgrade.

At Kosor, 102.E received a long-awaited order to withdraw and undergo inspection and repairs of its aircraft, before rejoining 31.VG; temporarily, it would be subordinate to 51.VG. The move followed in the afternoon of **5 April**. When landing at Zemun at around 15.00, the engine of the aircraft piloted by ppor Augustin Kovač seized, another testimony to the urgent need for engine overhaul. The men were greeted by puk Rubčić, who ordered them to stay overnight at the aerodrome and disperse the aircraft. During the day, a IK-3 of 161.E was struck off charge when kap Ik Bratovoje Urošević tore-off its undercarriage on landing, on his first flight on the type.

Fighter protection over Herzegovina, Dalmatia and Montenegro was left to 3.PŠ with its tiny resources. Readiness at Podgorica was maintained by a detachment of two BH.33Es, and two Breguet XIXs served for liaison.

With all the signals that the war was imminent, it was only at 21.00 on **5 April** that a handful of VVKJ commands received a ciphered radiogram with the warning that the German assault was expected to commence on the following morning. At Krušedol, ppuk Kostić summoned men of 32.VG, as remembered by kap Ik Milutin Grozdanović, head of 142.E:

*When the commander of 6. lovački puk, potpukovnik Kostić came in, the murmur among the young men stopped. The whole expression of the commander spoke about the important announcement. Perhaps it was finally 'the thing', that was expected for so long.*

*'During the night, and most probably in the early morning, the enemy will attack us!' - said the commander. 'There is no doubt that Belgrade will be the prime target of his air force. I expect each of you to fulfill his duty for the fatherland worthily.'*<sup>23</sup>

All men were ordered to be at readiness 'under arms' as of 05.00 the following morning. Aircraft had to be fully armed, with a second charge prepared, engines warmed up, radio sets checked and tuned, to enable take-off at shortest notice.

In Zemun, similar news was shared by puk Rubčić to the personnel of 51.VG. He ordered 102.E to keep standing patrols between Vršac and Bela Crkva on the Romanian border from early dawn, and left the men at ease until 22.00. As some went to see their families after a long spell, Miloš Žunjić went with the rest to 'Zlatna lira' (Golden Lyre) barroom in Belgrade for a modest celebration of his recent promotion to kap Ik. At Sušičko Polje, 31.VG received orders to have its aircraft ready for take-off from 05.30 onwards.

At a still unidentified date in early **April**, to compensate for the transfer to 2.LP, 105.E led by kap Ik Aleksandar Radičević was taken out of 4.LP and attached to 6.LP. Its five Hurricanes and a hack Fi 156C flew over from Zemun, where they were overhauled in Zmaj AD after long service in Macedonia, to the auxiliary airfield at Mali Radinci, practically the southwestern end of the Veliki Radinci runway. Inexplicably and unbelievably, something went wrong in communication channels between KV, 4.LP and 6.LP, with 105.E remaining inactive in the forthcoming battles, as it did not receive a single barrel of fuel!



**A pilot of 101.E, por Ratko Jovčić in front of a Bf 109E-3a at Krušedol after mobilization in March 1941. Jovčić flew eight combat sorties during the April War, but failed to encounter any enemy aircraft. He escaped to the Middle East but caught pneumonia in 1942 and barely survived after a two-year treatment in South Africa. In 1944 he accepted the call to join Tito's Partisan forces, but due to bad health he left the military service soon after the war. He lived in Belgrade and died on 5 October 1970 aged 56.**

(Aleksandar Kolo)

The main premise of the Yugoslav war plan R-41 was a frontal defense of the whole land. With borders stretching for more than 3,000 km and Greece its sole non-hostile neighbor, there was possibly no army in the world which could fulfill such a task against the Wehrmacht. The reasons for such an irrational setting were both political and traditional. On one side, Croat and Slovene political representatives led a long struggle to stop their compatriots from serving in the army in distant parts of the Kingdom. On the other, the army leadership was made up of men who rose to power more by their dexterity in court intrigues and staff imputations than their knowledge and understanding of modern warfare.

The very best of the VVKJ was concentrated in Operativno vazduhoplovstvo (OV - Operational Air Force). Apart from 1.VB, it contained three more aviation brigades, each of them with its own liaison escadrille. Protecting the air space over Central and Northern Croatia, Slovenia and Bosnia, and capable of striking into Austria and Hungary, was 2.VB, with 4.LP (14 Hurricanes and 7 Ikarus IK-2s) and 8.BP (23 Blenheims). The 3.VB, composed of 3.BP (59 Do 17Kas<sup>1</sup>)

<sup>1</sup> New research contests some of the conclusions presented in the book 'Dornier Do 17 The Yugoslav Story' from the same publisher. In case of conflicting data, information presented here should be considered more accurate.

and 5.LP (25 Furies and a BH.33E), was responsible for the defense of eastern Serbia and Macedonia and offensive actions against Bulgaria. From its bases in central Serbia and eastern Bosnia, 4.VB, with 1.BP (23 Blenheims) and 7.BP (26 SM-79Is) was within reach of Albania, Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary. Taking direct orders from the headquarters of OV were 11. samostalna izviđačka grupa za daljno izviđanje (SIG - Independent Long-range Reconnaissance Group) with 9 Blenheims and 2 Hawker Yugoslav Hinds Mk.I at Veliki Radinci, 81. samostalna bombarderska grupa (SBG - Independent Bomber Group) with 14 SM-79Is at Ortiješ, and 3.PŠ.

For close air support, courier services and reconnaissance for its seven armies, the Armijsko vazduhoplovstvo (Army Air Force) had some 80 obsolete aircraft dispersed in seven vazduhoplovna izviđačka grupa (VIG - Aviation Reconnaissance Group), each equipped with from four to 15 Breguet XIXs and Potez 25s and a Fi 156C, and one independent escadrille of Primorska armijska oblast (PAO - Coastal Army District).

The third segment of the VVKJ was the Pomoćno vazduhoplovstvo (Auxiliary Air Force) with some 430 aircraft, mainly trainers and obsolete biplanes, the sole worthy craft being a pair of Do 17Kas and a Blenheim in Vazduhoplovna škola bombardovanja (Aviation Bomber School) at Jasenica





**A unit which almost got a taste of combat during the assault on Yugoslavia, although not a part of Lft.4, was Erg.St./JG 27. Located at Parndorf near Vienna since January 1941, four of its aircraft unsuccessfully chased a Yugoslav Blenheim in the early morning of 7 April. Seen here is Bf 109E-4 'Black < Triangle' with a non-standard rear view mirror.**

*(Renato Schirer)*

an unknown pilot of Bf 109E-7 W.Nr.4116 from II./JG 54 to crash-land near Waldenburg in Saxony, possibly during a journey to the south. Three days later, Uffz. Wilhelm Boddem of 6.(Sch)/LG 2 went missing whilst on a transfer flight from Arad to Belica-Nord; he subsequently rejoined his unit unharmed. Bf 109E-4 'Yellow A' W.Nr.901 of 6.(Sch)/LG 2 crashed on take-off from Sofia-Vrazhdebna aerodrome on **5 April**, Uffz. Wollner survived unhurt, and on the same date Uffz. Max Bauch of 7./JG 54 crashed with Bf 109E-7 W.Nr.1547 on take-off from Kecskemet airfield in Hungary.

The main Bf 109 variant in Luftwaffe service at the time was the E-7, whilst many older Emils were modified to its standard. Compared to the Yugoslav E-3a, it had several advantages, among the most important being the automatic adjustment of the propeller pitch, which significantly relieved the pilot during a dogfight, and the by far superior Revi C/12D gun sight (Yugoslav machines had the old Oigee Revi 3c). Luftwaffe aircraft carried an 8mm armor plate behind the pilot's seat (a few also had the armored windshield), most of them were armed with MG FF/M wing cannons, which had a more stable trajectory and were loaded with powerful high-explosive shells, and could carry a 300 l ejectable external tank which enhanced its fuel capacity by 75%, whilst about a half of the engaged machines had jabo (fighter-bomber) capacity with ETC 500 bomb carrier installation. Also, a number of aircraft

were equipped with the DB 601N engine (their designation was E-4/N and E-7/N) with significantly better performance at higher altitude than the DB 601Aa. It is not known if any of the most advanced Emils, the E-7/Z, with the GM-1 boost installation, allowing a short-term increase of engine power up to 280hp, were used in the Balkans.

On the eve of war, some 2,500 Axis aircraft were dispersed at airfields in Italy, Austria, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria and Albania. The area of operations for VIII.Fl.Kps. was over Eastern and Southern Serbia, Macedonia and Northern Greece, X.Fl.Kps. was responsible for Montenegro, Herzegovina and Southern Dalmatia, Flie.Fü. Arad covered Eastern Croatia, Bosnia and Northern and Central Serbia, and Flie.Fü. Graz was responsible for the air space over Slovenia and Northern Croatia. The main task of the Lft.4 however, was the destruction of Belgrade in an operation symbolically coded 'Strafgericht' (Punitive Revenge).

Out of 321 Bf 109Es available to Lft.4, some 264 were operational. Despite heavy losses during the massive air battles over France and Britain in **1940**, single-engine fighter units of the Luftwaffe were at the peak of their strength. Their experience, excellent aircraft and superb tactics made German Bf 109E pilots possibly the toughest opponents of their time. And now, for the first time since the beginning of the war, they would have the chance to engage enemy Bf 109 pilots in combat...

## Chapter 2

### Bloody April

#### Black Dawn

The war for Yugoslavia began on **6 April 1941**. The main ground assault came from Bulgaria, where the German 12. Armee (Army) attacked in the direction of Kumanovo and Skoplje. The plan was simple - to cut off the Yugoslav link with Greece. Backing it up, units of VIII.Fl.Kps. received a multitude of tasks, but the main responsibility of its fighter forces were low-level raids in support of advancing ground troops as well as to find and destroy all enemy aircraft in the area.

The core of the VVKJ force in the south was 3.VB. Its 3.BP was equipped with 59 Dornier Do 17Ka bombers, the 64.VG was dispersed at Stubol and Obilić airfields at Kosovo, but 63.VG was late in its move and the beginning of hostilities caught it at the well known and ill-protected Petrovac auxiliary

airfield near Skoplje. The 5.LP was equipped with 25 helplessly outdated Hawker Yugoslav Fury Mk.II biplanes, an Avia BH.33E and several trainers, the 35.VG being situated since **12 March** at Kosačić near Leskovac, and 36.VG at Režanovačka Kosa, an open field which offered very little concealment next to Kumanovo. Apart from these, the few other VVKJ units in the area were armed with ancient biplanes and liaison aircraft of little combat value.

At around 05.30<sup>2</sup> the first German aircraft took-off from airfields in Bulgaria and took a course for Yugoslavia. Less than half an hour later, Petrovac came under attack by four Ju 87s,

2 From this point on all times will be presented in Central European Time, which was used in the Third Reich; The Yugoslav Kingdom was in the Eastern European Time zone, which went one hour before the German time.



**Bf 109E-7 'Yellow H' of 6.(Sch)/LG 2 at Belica-Nord. The fighter-bombers of II.(Sch)/LG 2 executed a raid which wiped out the Dorniers of 63.VG at Petrovac auxiliary airfield in the early hours of 6 April 1941.**

*(Manko Vasilev)*



at 17.40 without much effect. A Hurricane went after it and por Đorđe Vasojević claimed to have shot down an ‘SM-79’ over Neretva estuary after a prolonged battle in which his fighter was damaged. The only loss reported by II./KG 26 during the day was of He 111H W.Nr.3884 ‘1H+DM’ from 4. Staffel, which was severely damaged in a belly-landing at Grottaglie following a non-combat flight.

### Battle for Belgrade

At Zemun, pilots of 102.E tried to get some sleep when the alarm sounded from Belgrade at 04.15 and minutes later on the aerodrome itself. This proved to be a false alarm and was called off half an hour later. At 05.30, the 102.E duty pair, kap Ilk Milan Žunjić and nar Vukadin Jelić, took-off to reconnoite the Romanian border around Vršac. Other aircraft of 51.VG were warmed-up and armed, with pilots and ground crews at full readiness. When the patrol returned without anything to report an hour later, a second pair, kap Ilk Mihajlo Nikolić and ppor Miodrag Bošković, went up towards the zone Bela Crkva - Vršac - Kikinda at 06.40. They returned at 07.25 and again failed to notice anything unusual. The third duty pair, ppor Dragoslav Krstić and nar Vukadin Jelić, took-off at 07.30 to patrol in the area Obrenovac - Indija, not knowing that puk Rubčić had just summoned maj Romeo Adum, CO of 51.VG and his escadrille commanders and told them that the German invasion had started and an attack on Belgrade was imminent, as ground observers along the Hungarian and Romanian border had begun sending warnings about the approach of a thundering armada. It was made up of 234 bombers (some accounts put this figure at 261), some 30 Bf 110s and up to 100 Bf 109Es, 56 of them from Stab, II. and III./JG 77. In no time, the duty pair reported a huge enemy formation approaching Stara Pazova. With an inadequate alert system in place, the sirens sounded only at 07.45. Not only did it leave no chance for evacuation of the hapless civilians, but also placed 51.VG at a great disadvantage.

Five IK-3s (the sixth of nar Dušan Vujičić from 161.E suffered engine failure and could not take-off) and eight Emils

scrambled from Zemun with the scream of sirens and took a course towards Pančevo. They were still climbing as the Germans appeared overhead. The attack flowed from two directions. The first stream, composed of Ju 87s of Stab, I. and III./StG 77, Ju 88s of KG 51, escorted by Stab, II. and III./ JG 77, and II./JG 54, and He 111s of II./KG 4 with III./JG 54, crossed the Romanian border near Vršac and approached on a south-western course, its spearheads reaching the capital at 07.51. The second formation, made of Stab, I. and III./KG 2 and III./KG 3, escorted by I./ZG 26, flew over the border with Hungary west of Subotica and approached Belgrade from the northwest.

It was the pilots of II./JG JG 77, escorting KG 51 Ju 88’s, who were first to encounter the defenders and they quickly claimed five Bf 109s: Obfw. Werner Petermann of 5./JG 77 one each at 08.03 and 08.13, in 6./JG 77 Uffz Franz Schulte reported one at 08.07 and Uffz. Rudolf Schmidt another at 08.11, and Fw. Otto Niemeyer of 4./JG 77 the last at 08.15. Also, Hptm. Helmut Henz of 4./JG 77 claimed a Hurricane at 08.15 - almost certainly one of the IK-3s. At roughly that time, Oblt. Erich Friedrich of Stab/JG 77 accounted for a Bf 109, and III./JG 77, which escorted Stukas of StG 77, got its share of combat: Fw. Erwin Riehl of 9./JG 77 claimed a Dewoitine - undoubtedly an IK-3 - at 08.15, and at 08.45 Oblt. Armin Schmidt from the same Staffel closed the score with yet another Bf 109. Lt. Emil Omert of 9./JG 77 wrote in his diary:

*The day of the deployment is finally there. The operation ‘Strafgericht’ begins today. In early morning the start for the Stuka escort takes place. My Staffel flies right at the end of the Geschwader, so that we appear over Belgrade last. To our regret we soon see a Serb heading for the ground in flames. The pilot swings slowly towards the soil on his parachute. The few Serbs with their weary birds were hunted just like that. They also used some Bf 109s. The impact of the Stukas is devastating. In short, Belgrade is shrouded in a cloud of smoke. I return home without contact with the enemy, as I was clumsily led.<sup>27</sup>*

Several strafings of Zemun airfield were also accomplished by JG 77 and one each of Bf 109E-3a, Breguet XIX, Ca.310 and RWD-13S were destroyed and at least two planes

damaged (Po 631 2072 and Breguet XIX 3027). Stab, II. and III. Gruppe claimed two ground kills apiece.

The last attacking group was made up of four Staffeln of III./JG 54<sup>4</sup> which took-off from Arad at around 08.10 and picked up He 111s of II./KG 4, which came all the way from Wien-Aspern. Leading 7./JG 54 was Oblt. Günther Scholz:

*When I saw the Yugoslav Me 109 in the air, I had to think back to the time in Jesau. In 1939 the Luftwaffe trained some Yugoslav pilots on Messerschmitts. One of them was sent to Jesau and back then I got the task of looking after him. This Yugoslav officer was with us at the airfield for 14 days. He was already a skilled fighter pilot and I had to get him acquainted with the Me 109. We spent many hours together in the air. He flew as my wingman and we practised our manoeuvres and circuits, even trying a bit of aerobatics.*

*In the evening I drove him by car into the countryside and showed him East Prussia, or we drove to Königsberg to a bar. Together with other friends we caroused pretty well. He was a very likable man and spoke relatively good German. When he left us, almost a firm friendship developed between us.*

*All of it now came back to my memory. Maybe the officer from back then now sat in one of these Yugoslav Me 109s and flew against us?<sup>28</sup>*

The first victory for the defenders was claimed by the duty pair of 102.E. North of the capital, near Batajnica, ppor Dragoslav Krstić and nar Vukadin Jelić, at 24 the youngest pilot in his escadrille, engaged I./KG 2 Do 17Zs, escorted by Bf 110s of I./ZG 26:

*After twenty minutes, we saw the enemy formation. I could not believe how large it was! I threw a quick glance at the instruments and cocked my weapons. The leader warned me over the radio and ordered me to let them through and then to attack*

<sup>4</sup> Including 5./JG 54, which was temporarily attached to III./JG 54 and flew on all of its missions over Yugoslavia until being reunited with the rest of II./JG 54 on **11 April**. From sources available, it seems that such pattern was not followed by 4./JG 54 and 6./JG 54, which did not fly on ops as a part of II. i.e. III./JG 77 formations, but rather operated autonomously.

*them from behind. They passed on the left and slightly lower. The day was clear and I’m sure they saw us. We turned left and took up position to attack. I closed the cooler blinds and dived, following the leader at a close distance. Suddenly, there were swarms of tracers all around us. I was hoping that none of them ‘carried my name’! I watched potporučnik Krstić, who was in front of me, as he began to shoot at the nearest enemy bomber. At this point, the German gunners were able to straddle him. He broke-off the attack and in a left turn I lost him from sight. ‘God, was he alive?’ - crossed my mind.*

*My Dornier was already in the gun sight. I pressed the trigger. Soon, a large plating ripped from it and a rain of small parts went close by my plane, apparently as a result of my fire! I saw one of his landing legs falling out as the German fell sideways and separated from the formation.*

*My ammunition was almost finished. I pushed the stick forward and fell like a stone. I pulled out of a dive and tried to get my bearings. I looked left and right, but everything was unknown to me. After a few minutes of flight, with great relief I saw the Danube.*

*Soon I came close to the airport, from which some smoke was rising. I turned, lowered the wheels and only then, in the approach, I saw that the aerodrome was under attack. The long nose of the Messerschmitt considerably obscured my view, as someone had belly-landed almost in the middle of the runway, but I landed well.*

*Whilst the mechanics raced towards me, more looking at the sky than at me, I tried to get out of the cockpit. I asked them what happened with my leader and they answered that it was his machine which made the wheels-up landing.<sup>29</sup>*

Bf 109E of ppor Krstić soon fell prey to JG 77 strafers, thick smoke from the ignited parachute in the cockpit enveloped the airfield and possibly spared other aircraft from similar fate. Two Dorniers of 2./KG 2 returned to Zwölfaxing with some 20 hits each, whilst the bomber gunners were credited with a Bf 109 shot down.

The first 102.E pilot to go down was the CO, kap Ik Miloš Žunjić. He reputedly claimed a Ju 87, before engaging



As if there was no war at all, ground crews of 8./JG 54 relax next to their aircraft at Arad airfield at the beginning of the Yugoslav campaign. (Craig Busby)



Emils of 4./JG 54 at Deta airfield in Romania. This Staffel, commanded by Oblt. Hans Phillip, was temporarily seconded to II./JG 77 in the first days of the Yugoslav campaign. (Dénes Bernád)





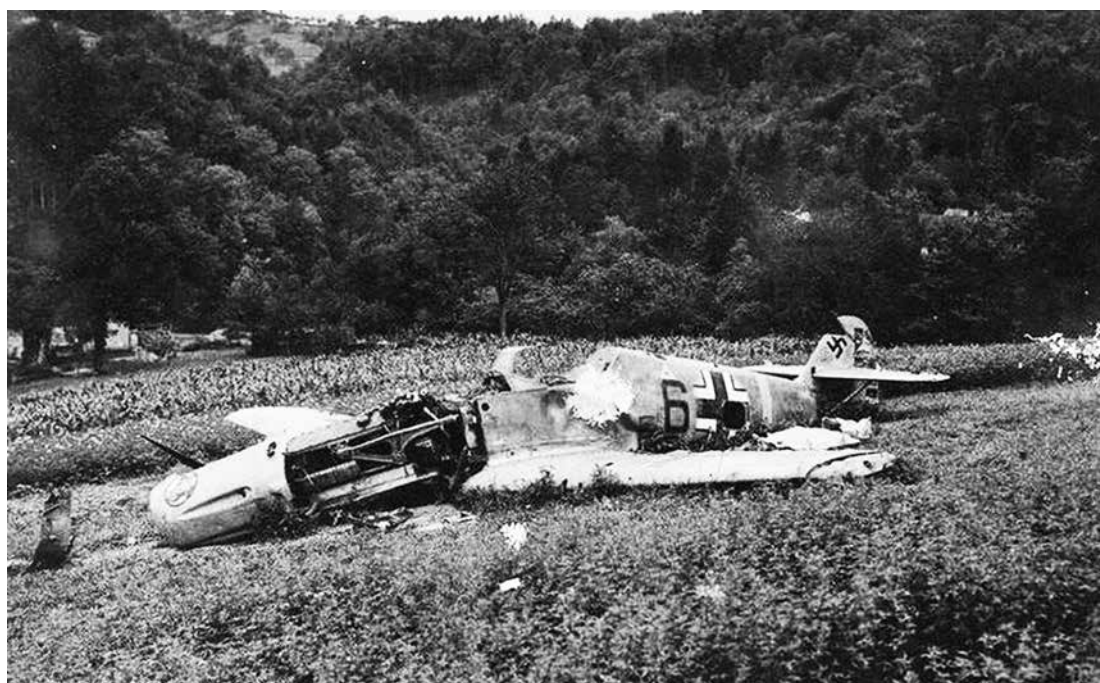
**Bf 109E-7 trop 'Black 6' of 2./JG 27 abandoned in a field near Šentilj in July 1941, long after being shot down in the Yugoslav campaign. Quite interesting and rare, the aircraft, an E-1 brought to E-7 standard, retained the old wing armament configuration of two MG 17 machineguns.**

*(Jan van den Heuvel)*

*won't let such a favorable target escape. We dive down on the train, the bursts from our machine guns hammer into the locomotive, which is forced to halt wrapped in steam, over and over again. The track is blocked for the time being!*

*A few minutes later the outlines of the airfield, which was revealed to us by the Croat Hauptmann, rise from the mist. I count eight parked machines, seven of which end up in flames from our fire. The ground fire is modest, and still nothing moves in the air. While departing I look around again and see the airfield enveloped in a thick black oil and petrol cloud. We must have done a good job.<sup>45</sup>*

Their target was Pleso airfield, where eight Breguet XIXs were destroyed and a ninth damaged, all previously belonging to 606.TE and waiting to be allocated to 704.EzV, which was not yet operational.



**The additional oil tank on the left side of the engine, a distinctive feature for Bf 109E-7, can be seen on the wrecked 'Black 6'. Lt. Willi Kothmann had seven claims to his credit at the time of his crash-landing and capture in Slovenia on 6 April 1941. He scored six more victories before being killed in air combat with 238 Sqn Hurricanes on 2 April 1942 near the Libyan coast.**

*(Jan van den Heuvel)*

**Bf 109E-7 trop W.Nr.1586 of 1./JG 27 with its back broken at Graz-Thalerhof on 6 April 1941. Although the damage was reported as 40%, it is obvious it was more than 60% and a write-off.**

*(Boris Ciglić)*



128. pešadijski puk (PP - Infantry Regiment) of the Dravska divizija (Drava Division) near Ptuj. Geschwader-Adjutant Oblt. Otto Kath returned to Graz late on the following day:

*I was hit in the cooler. On both sides. My engine failed during a climb. I just crossed over the Mura and put the machine down on its belly on the other side of the river on a meadow bank, but still in enemy territory. During the slide, it struck a willow pile on the right, turned towards the embankment, skipped it and shot into the water. It sank immediately. I struck my head on the gun sight, and lost consciousness, but through the cold high rising water I came back to myself, with furious force I pushed up the hood against the bubbling dirty brown water, I fell forward over the yellow nose, and was gone completely. When I partially regained consciousness, the dirty water was filling my mouth and nose. I would have drowned for sure, if a courageous farm boy hadn't pulled me out of the machine into his boat, a few moments before it completely disappeared into the rapid current.*

*They took me to their river mill. The Chetnik (sic) search party luckily came without dogs! The boy, sent as a messenger to our distant lines, did not come back. Stalking along the forest edge to the north, after many hours I suddenly saw a German reconnaissance patrol on the fender of an ambulance with a waving Red Cross flag on top of the embankment. They brought me through the lines; Fritz, my life saver, came with me.<sup>46</sup>*

Two Blenheims of 8.BP attacked targets in Styria during the afternoon. The machine from 216.E bombarded Graz at 17.02 and although being chased by a pair of Bf 109Es of 1./JG 27 all the way to Maribor, managed to return to Rovine near Banja Luka undamaged.

The last known fighter mission of the day from Graz-Thalerhof was flown by a Kette of Stab/JG 54 and the Stabschwarm of II./JG 54 between 16.57 and 18.15. After escorting Stukas of II./StG 77 to their targets in the area of Ptuj, they proceeded on a free hunt, during which Hptm. Dietrich Hrabak claimed the destruction of a train.

During the day, Bf 109E-7 W.Nr.1586 of 1./JG 27 was wrecked (although reported only 40% damaged) after it caught

fire upon landing at Graz, possibly when returning from one of the morning missions. In Slovenia, Lt. Willi Kothmann from 2./JG 27 was captured slightly wounded after a crash-landing near Šentilj and taken to the headquarters of Dravska divizija in Ptujška Gora for questioning. His Bf 109E-7 'Black 6' might have hit by anti-aircraft fire from 128.PP near Pragersko, or brought down in one of the few skirmishes reported by 34.VG Hurricane pilots during the day, although they submitted no claims. Lt. Kothmann was liberated by 11 April.

Altogether, 1./JG 27, Stab/JG 54 and Stab II./JG 54 flew 65 combat sorties during the day and claimed 15 VVKJ aircraft on the ground, the actual losses being even higher.

### Defense Melting

On the second day of the campaign, German ground troops were in full advance. Bad weather prevented almost any flying by units of X.Fl.Kps. and Flie.Fü. Graz. It was the Erg.St./JG 27, which scrambled four Bf 109Es from Parndorf



**'White 4' of 1.(J)/LG 2 lying damaged on its belly, thought to be Bf 109E-7 W.Nr.3439, which crash-landed at Trn on 7 April 1941.**

*(Boris Ciglić)*





**The carbonized DB 601Aa and the propeller are all that remained of this 141.E Emil.**

(Boris Ciglić)

603.TE that he flew in as a passenger. The Germans entered Kragujevac 36 hours later. Still, it must be said that even by then the Emils, with their narrow undercarriage and thin wheels, would not stand a chance of successful take-off from the muddy, undrained airfield at Sušičko Polje.

During the morning, the first of 14 Savoias of 7.BP, which abandoned their airfields in Preljina, near Čačak, and Gorobilje, near Užička Požega, due to similar rumors, began arriving at Ortiješ, where kap Ik Stipčić in 'L-2' again intercept-



**Another 141.E Bf 109E-3a burned in the morning hours of 10 April 1941. Both Kosovo Crosses are framed with provisional white circles.**

(Boris Ciglić)

ed one of them, but broke-off after recognizing it as friendly. The Commander of 212.E, kap Iik Aleksandar Dobanovački, was unable to find Mostar and after a three-hour flight landed with his SM-79I 'White 11' at Veliki Radinci. It was from his crew that the men of 6.LP learned in astonishment about the fall of Niš and the German push into Central Serbia.

As the rain and snow enveloped Mostar in the afternoon, shots rang through Neretva valley, whilst armed men, identifying themselves as Croat guards appeared in and around Kosor airfield. At 15.00 maj Vladimir Tihomirov, head of 3.PŠ came from Mostar with the news from the meeting with arm den Milojko Janković, now the head of PAO. In short, the situation was serious and if it worsened, the crews would be allowed to fly away with their aircraft wherever they wanted. During the evening, officers and NCOs of 81.SBG and 3.PŠ held a meeting where the majority opted to escape to the Soviet Union that same night.

32.VG at Krušedol was slightly reinforced during the day as the mechanics managed to assemble 'L-4' by replacing the engine that had its oil tank ruptured with the one taken from another aircraft with peppered fuselage, whilst ppor Otmar Lajh brought a Bf 109E-3a from 6.VTP in Zemun.

With the Vardar valley and Salonika firmly in German hands, that day saw the transfer of the first Luftwaffe units to occupied airfields in Yugoslavia, III./JG 27 moving from Belica to Bitolj and III./JG 77 from Radomir to Skoplje at midday, the latter unit flying its first combat sortie from the new base between 16.30 and 17.55, presumably in the area of Peć. Bad weather still hampered much of the flying and during one of the few sorties flown from Belica-Süd, Stab/JG 27 lost its technical officer, Oblt. Herbert Mardaas, when he crashed with Bf 109E-7 W.Nr.4891 into Jakupica mountain, eight km west-northwest of Bogomila village in Central Macedonia. Three days later Maj. Wolfgang Schellmann ordered his air signal officer, Lt. Werner Stahl, to find the missing airman:

*I drove away with a driver in a Horch Kübelwagen in the suspected direction and soon learned the location of the crash from the locals. It was lying in high mountains near the very remote mountain village of Bogomila. With great difficulty I got there. No German soldier had ever set foot in the place. Quite*



**Pulverized Emil at Sušičko Polje. Five Emils of 101.E and nine of 141.E were destroyed due to a panic by 2.LP and 31.VG command, caused by rumors.**

(Boris Ciglić)



**Bf 109E-3a 'L-53' W.Nr.2348 with serial 2555 from 141.E was also set alight in the morning of 10 April 1941, yet somehow the fire failed to spread and it was only partially burned.**

(Đorđe Nikolić)

*surprisingly I was welcomed with my driver like a prince. The village carpenter cut a large cross and on the second day the whole population in their Sunday clothes, on donkeys and on foot, went on a march towards the crash site high above in the hills. I rode with the mayor at their head. Behind us the boys carried the heavy cross. It went on uphill for several hours on steepest paths.*

*High up they had already buried Mardaas days before, as best as they could. Now everybody helped to gather the stones into a large mound. The Serbs could not be prevented from laboriously digging up many primrose plants, until the burial mound was completely planted with flowers. It was a major undertaking, which was done by the people under the leadership of the major entirely on their own initiative. I never dared to ask for anything extraordinary from them. A few minutes of remembrance by all ended this amazing funeral.*

*The area of Bogomila later became the center of the Serbian resistance. How was such a reversal possible?*<sup>56</sup>

In the early hours of **11 April**, between 01.00 and 01.40, five Savoias of 81.SBG were started up at Ortiješ. One plane flew away to Kapino Polje near Nikšić, in Montenegro, whilst from the four bound for the Soviet Union only one reached its destination. An SM-79I, filled with 3.PŠ pupils, suffered an accident when taxiing and had to be abandoned, a second returned to Ortiješ, and the third crashed into Igman mountain with the loss of at least six men on board. In the morning the situation in Mostar became critical. The rebels were disarming and occasionally fighting regular army units and the right Neretva bank with the western part of the city and Jasenica

aerodrome was in their hands. Kosor and Ortiješ were guarded by a few loyal troops, but there was a danger that they could be stormed at any time. On top of that, the weather was anything but convenient for any flying. During the afternoon, Croat rebels took full control of Mostar, further complicating the position of 3.PŠ.

In Bulgaria, VIII.Fl.Kps. was grounded by bad weather, but Flie.Fü. Arad and Flie.Fü. Graz launched 117 bombers, 49 Bf 110s and 31 Bf 109Es against troop concentrations, rail



**A German NCO investigates the wreck of 'L-74'. The plane flipped over on landing on 6 April 1941 in the hands of nar Aleksandar Trajković from 101.E.**

(Boris Ciglić)





**Captured 'L-15' is carefully examined by a visiting Hungarian officer at Krušedol. The plane was damaged in battle with II./JG 54 aircraft on 7 April. Note the absence of wing armament, confirming some recollections that a few VVKJ Emils did fly in combat without cannons.**  
(Vojni muzej, Belgrade)

Yugoslav Bf 109E pilots, but they fared badly: ten were killed and seven wounded. No fewer than 23 Emils were lost or damaged beyond the possibility of a quick repair in air combat and a further seven in flying accidents, three were destroyed on the ground, one fell to friendly AA fire, whilst 21 were set on fire by their own crews. German troops captured at least four Bf 109E-3as at Krušedol (among them 'L-9' W.Nr.2188 and 'L-15'; the third plane is thought to have been W.Nr.2400, which is known to have served later with the Luftwaffe before being lost in **March 1943**), all in need of some sort of repair, three at Sušičko Polje (W.Nr.2323, 'L-53' W.Nr.2348 and 'L-74' W.Nr.2414), as well as five airframes at VTZ in Kraljevo (including 2519 and 2526).

The suffering of the Yugoslav pilots and their country was just beginning. Just a handful escaped to the Middle East, only to get entangled in the political struggles and intrigues of the exiled government, thus only few of them reached operational RAF and USAAF units to continue the fight. The majority ended up in German and Italian POW camps, from which

restraint most of the Croats and some Slovenes were released to join the new Croat armed forces and some even ended up in the ranks of the Luftwaffe. Those who evaded capture were soon forced to choose sides and ideologies in a merciless civil war which engulfed Yugoslavia.

During the short campaign, German Bf 109E pilots gave an excellent account of themselves. In a series of air battles, they claimed 48 victories, 44 of them confirmed. The exact number of aircraft destroyed on the ground is not known, but it amounted to several dozen. In return, just two Bf 109Es fell to Yugoslav fighters (one to a Fury and another to a Hurricane), seven were lost or damaged beyond repair in combat and 14 in flying accidents. Four pilots were killed, five went missing (all subsequently returned to their units), and at least five were wounded. All but two Luftwaffe pilots who scored against the VVKJ (Armin Schmidt and Josef Amberger) were already or would subsequently become aces. They were masterfully led, flew superb aircraft and had sky-high self-confidence. It seemed as if the world was theirs to conquer..



**Bf 109E-3a 'L-53' was still standing at Sušičko Polje on 1 June 1941. In the meantime, the plane had been vandalized and its wings dismantled and left on the ground.**  
(Boris Ciglič)

## Chapter 3

### The Wild Battlefield

#### Bandengebiet

After the capitulation, the Yugoslav Kingdom was torn apart by the conquerors. On **24 April**, a demarcation line between the Italian and German occupation areas was established. Slovenia was divided and annexed between the two major Axis powers. Italy also annexed parts of Gorski Kotar, the bulk of Dalmatia with most of the Adriatic islands, and Montenegro, while part of Southern Serbia and Macedonia were annexed to Albania - under Italian rule. As a reward for their support in the invasion, Hungary received Bačka, Baranja, Međimurje and Prekomurje, while Bulgaria got most of Macedonia and parts of Eastern Serbia. Germany kept control over the rest of Serbia (where a puppet government was

installed) and the Banat region, whilst the so-called Nezavisna Država Hrvatska (NDH - Independent State of Croatia), under German tutorship, included Central Croatia, Slavonia and small part of Dalmatia, Bosnia, Herzegovina and Eastern Syrmia.

The Yugoslav aviation industry was quickly harnessed by the RLM and absorbed by major German producers. During **June**, Ikarus AD became part of WNF as its Werk VII. Under new rulers, it manufactured tail units, rudders and horizontal stabilizers for late models of the Bf 109. As part of diversification of the German aircraft industry, in Slovenia several factories were established and others switched their production programme to support the war effort. These included VDM-Luftfahrtwerke Steiermark in Tezno, near Maribor (propellers and parts for DB 605 engines), KIG-Aßling in Jesenice (armor



**A Bf 109E taking-off from Zagreb-Borongaj aerodrome shortly after the fall of Yugoslav Kingdom in the spring of 1941. The plane possibly belonged to some training unit and was on cross-country flying in the Balkans.**  
(Boris Ciglič)



Near Skoplje the formation split in half, the first group going down through a gap in clouds and the second flying above the overcast. With fuel getting very low, both formations jettisoned their bombs. Near the Adriatic they came under persistent attacks by two separate groups of Bf 109s, one being from 12./JG 27, which took-off from Podgorica, and another from III./JG 27, which came from Devoli. A B-17 of the 96th BS was crippled by a 9./JG 27 pilot over Albania and subsequently ditched 90 km southeast of Bari. B-17F-50-BO 42-5411 from the same squadron dropped out of formation after a fighter attack with engine no.1 feathered. As it reached the southern tip of the Montenegrin coast, it was caught by Uffz. Rudolf Muras of 8./JG 27, who fired a coup de grace at it southeast of Ulcinj, reporting that it went down at 15.43 and it did, crash-landing on a beach near the city (2/Lt Warren Lins; ten captured). Five Bf 109 destroyed and three probables were claimed by 2nd BG gunners, but none were lost. Another bomber, identified as a B-24, was claimed jointly by pilots of 12./JG 27 some 40 km west of Bar, but no corresponding loss could be traced.

On **30 January** airfields in the Italian northern province of Friuli were hit by the 15th AF. Villorba was strafed by 60 Thunderbolts of the 325th FG, before 77 Fortresses of the 97th and 301st BG and a Liberator of the 449th BG, escorted by 22 Lightnings of the 1st FG, dropped their ordnance, 41 Fortresses of the 2nd BG bombarded Lavariano, 35 of the 99th BG attacked Maniago under the cover of 22 Lightnings of the 14th FG, and 62 Liberators of the 449th and 450th BG guarded by 32 Lightnings of the 82nd FG struck Campoformido. They were challenged by I./JG 77 from Lavariano, I./JG 53 from Maniago, II./JG 53, which came all the way from Wien-Seyring, and I° Gruppo Caccia (Gr.C. - Fighter Group) of Aeronautica Nazionale Repubblicana (ANR - Italian National Republican Air Force) from Campoformido. In a series of wild clashes German fighters claimed up to five Liberators, eight Fortresses, a Thunderbolt and a pair of Lightnings, while the Italian pilots claimed four Thunderbolts and a Liberator (real losses were just five bombers and three fighters). Three of the German claims were made over the Adriatic, close to the Istrian shore. At 12.01 Fw. Wulf Focke of I./JG 77 claimed a Thunderbolt 35 km west of Novigrad. P-47D-16-RE 42-75967 of the 318th FS was hit in air combat northwest of Villaorba, 1/Lt Morgan Lowry turned towards the sea and minutes later bailed out west of Novigrad; he was seen safe in his dinghy but was never recovered. Two Lightnings were claimed by 5./JG 53 pilots, the first one south of Grado, over the Bay of Trieste, by Uffz. Zobel at 12.38, and the second 25 km west of Novigrad by Uffz. Helmut Rosenbaum at 12.43. The sole machine of that type lost was P-38G-10-LO 42-13173 'Sweet Pea'. CO of the 97th FS/82nd, FG Maj Charles Spencer remains missing to this day. The defenders lost 17 Bf 109Gs and three C.205s in the air, with three more Bf 109Gs badly damaged, all of them over Italy.

Bf 109G-8 'White 14' of I./NAGr.12 was lost in a freak accident at Rajlovac on **3 February**. The event was witnessed by por (Lt.) Bruno Južnić, pilot of 7.ZJ ZNDH:

*It was very cold, as it usually is at this time of year. Rajlovac was covered with snow. Unexpectedly, five Me 109s came in to land, mistaking our airfield for the nearby Butmir. Due to bad terrain and many holes, whilst racing across the runway, one of them suddenly made a 90° turn, went directly*

*into one of the hangars, smashed through the doors and banged straight into our Caproni 310. Both planes were write-offs. Miraculously, no one on the ground was hurt, nothing happened to the pilot either, all that he had was amnesia.*<sup>72</sup>

Whilst on a practice flight on the **4th**, Uffz. Hans Zippert of 12./JG 27 suffered severe injuries after crashing in Bf 109G-6 'Yellow 9' W.Nr.20230 some 15 km southeast of Skoplje, due to engine failure. Later in the day, IV./JG 27 moved from Skoplje to Medoševac.

On **14 February** Bf 109G-6 'Black 5' 'RG+FL' W.Nr.410064 of 2./NAGr.12 was slightly damaged when returning from a recce over Adriatic, as its pilot came in to land at Jasenica at low speed.

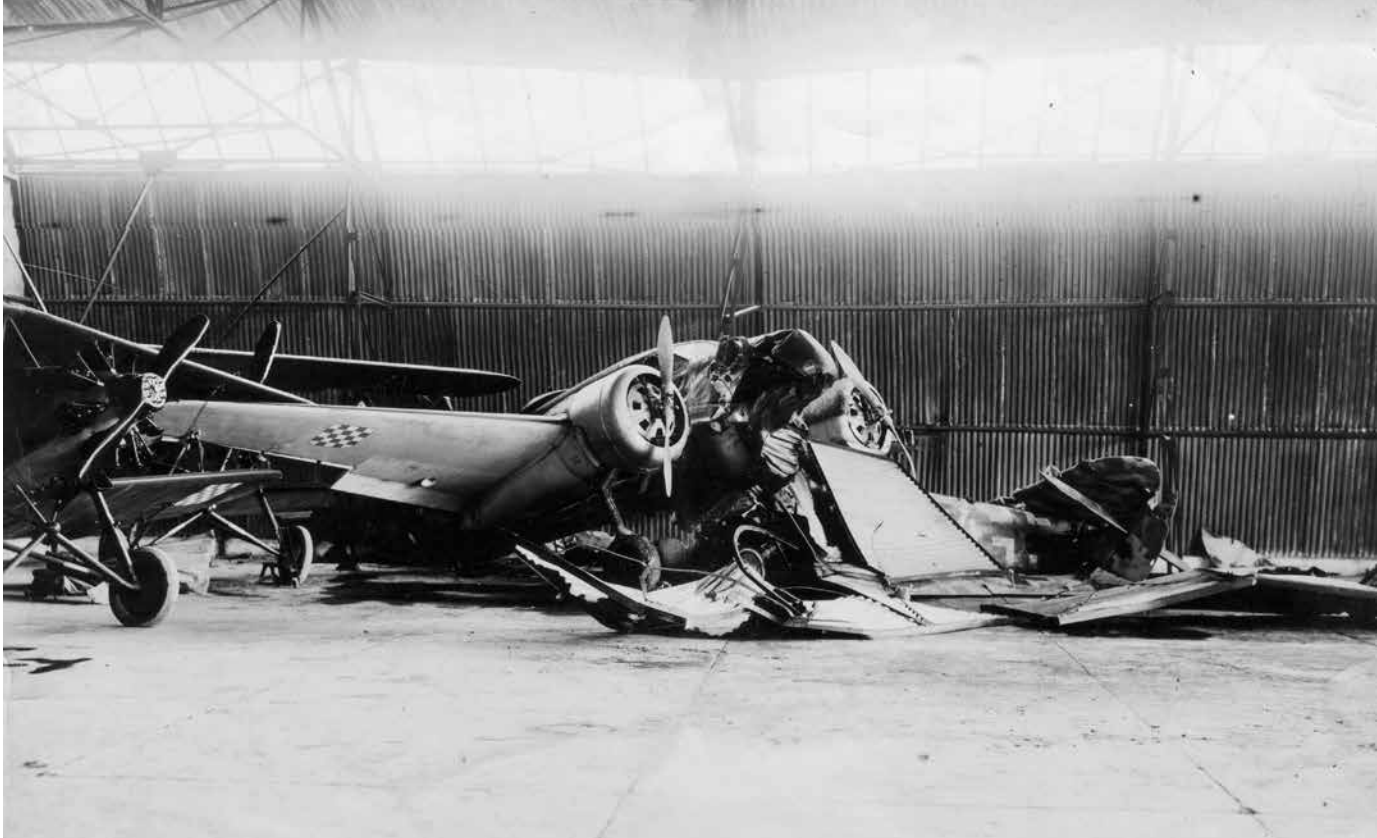
During a ferry flight from Jasenica to Medoševac on **23 February**, a formation of nine Bf 109G-6s of III./JG 27 got lost in bad weather. Low on fuel and in approaching darkness, eight planes force-landed at Ravne auxiliary airfield near Jagodina. Two officers and two NCOs were unhurt, one pilot had to be hospitalized, and the remaining three were slightly injured. The fate of the ninth aircraft and its pilot, belonging to 9./JG 27, was reported to Feldgendarmarie in Aleksinac by Soko Banja district chief Krsta Spasić two days later:

*On the 23rd of this month a group of German aircraft flew over this district. At 16.30 one of them - Messerschmitt 109 - left a trail of black smoke above the area of Nikolinci village, and shortly thereafter a fighter pilot bailed out. The aircraft turned and plunged into the earth, where it caught fire and burned out.*

*German fighter pilot Unteroffizier Franz Kussius luckily reached the ground, but immediately got captured by a group of armed men of Draža Mihailović, who promptly took him into a nearby village to their corps commander. Corps commander major Brana Petrović, finding that he was a German non-commissioned officer, ordered that he should not be touched or mistreated but instead, he was to be handed over with all his belongings and parachute to the legal authorities in Soko Banja, which was done at around 20 hours that same evening. German pilot Franz Kussius was not even disarmed by Mihailović's men on this occasion, instead, they parted cordially and shook hands with him. Next day the mayor of Soko Banja arranged a dinner for this German soldier and with a German truck, which came from Aleksinac, he returned to his command.*

*Interesting to note and underscore, when captured by armed men of Draža Mihailović, pilot Kussius expected the worst and at one moment he said that he was an only son, that he only has an old mother in Germany and appealed to be allowed, before he is shot, to write a letter to his mother. However, commander of the Sokobanjska brigada (Soko Banja Brigade), kapetan Aleksandar Todorović, who was the first one to reach him, told the German Unteroffizier, that he was currently under their protection and that no evil could happen to him, as they are national Chetniks and don't kill German soldiers but only fight against the communists. After this honorable statement from one of Mihailović's officers, Unteroffizier Kussius relaxed and accepted the food which was offered to him by these national Chetniks.*

*In the following conversation he said that he really had four lucky moments this day: first, bailing out from the plane in time, second, for having his chute deployed, third, for reaching the ground alive, and fourth, for not falling among the commu-*



**Sarajevo-Rajlovac, 3 February 1944: aftermath of the ground collision between Bf 109G 'White 14' of I./NAGr.12 and Ca.310 of 7.ZJ ZNDH. The German fighter was a complete write-off.**  
(Dragan Savić)

*nists but among national Chetniks who received him in soldierly style, and so escorted him alive and without any maltreatment.*<sup>73</sup>

Whether the fear of reprisals or the fact that the commander of Deligradski korpus (Deligrad Corps) JVuO, maj Branivoj 'Brana' Petrović, was a pre-war VVKJ fighter pilot himself (and older brother of Spanish Civil War fighter ace Boško Petrović), contributed to the lenient treatment of Uffz. Kussius remains unknown. The eight aircraft at Ravne were left unprotected and a platoon of Partisans from 2. južnomoravski odred (South Morava Detachment) set all of them on fire on **29 February**.

After several postponements, on **20 February** the USAAF and RAF launched Operation 'Argument'. A string of coordinated, full-scale attacks were carried out by 8th AF and RAF Bomber Command from its bases in the United Kingdom and 15th AF from Italy, their main target being aircraft production facilities across the Third Reich. On a couple of occasions the Yugoslav battleground had its share of action in the 'Argument', or 'Big Week' as it is nowadays colloquially better known.

A total of 87 B-17s of the 5th BW and escorts made up of 56 P-47s and 97 P-38s went after the Steyr-Daimler-Puch aircraft factory in Steyr on **24 February**. As the huge air battle raged over Austria, 27 B-17s of the 99th BG and some P-38s of the 14th FG, which separated from the main force en route to the target in bad weather, went after the alternate - the oil refinery in Rijeka. Six 'Bf 109s' attacked this force near the target, one of them being claimed by bomber gunners. At 13.10 2/Lt Jack Harrow of the 37th FS claimed a 'Bf 109' damaged above

Rijeka. The attackers were C.205s of I° Gr.C. ANR and they suffered no losses.

There was renewed action by Bf 109Gs over Yugoslavia on **25 February**, the last day of the 'Big Week'. The main American forces struck the Messerschmitt aircraft factory at Regensburg-Prüfening, others went on a diversionary raid against Graz-Thalerhof airfield, and several formations hit alternates. First to engage the raiders was I./JG 53, which went up from Maniago at 10.38. This unit attacked a formation of more than 50 Liberators southwest of Ljubljana and its



**With its left wing and nose shattered, there was no way of making this ZNDH Caproni airworthy again.**  
(Dragan Savić)



*opposite the island of Krk. I was forced to bail out at an altitude of 1,000 meters, allowed myself to fall and then - almost too late - pulled the ripcord. The shock of deployment and touchdown came almost simultaneously. I was fortunate to come down in a small meadow, which measured perhaps 20 by 20 meters, for all around there was nothing but stony ground littered with rocks and boulders. In spite of this I suffered several bruises and sprains when I hit, as well as - as I was to later learn - a fractured spine. The first thing I did was look around for a place to hide. I soon found one, on a small island in the middle of a stream, where I then spent the rest of the day.*

*I stayed in my island hiding place until evening, then I set out across the mountains to the northwest in the direction of Crikvenica, where I hoped to come across German or at least German-friendly troops. It was hard going through the mountainous terrain and my generally poor condition did not make the foot march any easier. Nevertheless, by the following morning I had covered a good distance and decided that when day came I would once again take shelter in a suitable hiding place. I came to a small rise above a village, where I hid myself behind one of the numerous large boulders. Then not five meters from my hiding place I discovered a machine-gun post manned by two men. They were wearing unfamiliar brown greatcoats and were speaking in a Slavic language I did not recognize. I stayed where I was, more or less immobile, until afternoon. From my hiding place I could also see that there were obviously soldiers in the village below; now and then a sound wafted over from the village to my hiding place. Then in the afternoon there was a surge of activity down below - groups of soldiers ran across the field, dropped to the ground, got up again, all to the accompaniment of commands which even I could hear. Then all of a sudden I heard quite distinctly: ‘To the left by twos, march!’ Meanwhile one of the two sentries had left and walked down to the village. That was my chance: I reached for my weapon and leapt at the remaining soldier. I then marched him towards the village with my pistol pointing at his back; there I had the good fortune to find the officer in charge. I learned that the two sentries were Croatian soldiers in German service.<sup>80</sup>*

Hptm. Seiz came down in the area between Grižane village and Crikvenica. He returned to Maniago on **5 April**, but due to spinal injury he spent more than four months in convalescence.

The opponents of I./JG 53 were from the 82nd FG, which lost none of their P-38s, whilst 1/Lt Charles Pinson of the 96th FS claimed a Bf 109 destroyed, and from the 96th FS, 1/Lt Leon Parcells one Bf 109 destroyed and another damaged, 1/Lt John Tate a Bf 109 destroyed and an Fw 190 (sic) damaged, and Capt Claud Ford a Bf 109 probable.

Next in the fray were I° Gr.C. ANR, which engaged the leading bomber units over Southern Austria and claimed a Fortress for the loss of two C.205s in a collision, and I./JG 77 which took-off from Lavariano at 09.01. Fhj.Obfw. Heinz Meschke of 2./JG 77 claimed a B-24 at 10.10 over Hočevje, southeast of Grosuplje, and Hptm. Armin Köhler another seven minutes later over Ljubljana. Two Liberators were indeed shot down at around this time, B-24H-15-CF 41-29407 of the 742nd BS/455th BG falling near Sveta Trojica village (1/Lt Willis Pardee; five captured, five evaders) and B-24H-10-FO 42-52142 of the 720th BS/450th BG, which was hit near Celje

and crashed just across the Austrian border, near the village of Aibl (2/Lt John Fulks; one killed, nine captured). The Thunderbolts of the 317th FS intervened and 1/Lt Richard Dunkin, 1/Lt Cullen Hoffman and 1/Lt Richard Mock claimed a Bf 109 apiece west of Zagreb and 1/Lt Georgie Hamilton one damaged southeast of Ljubljana. Uffz. Gerhard Horst of 2./JG 77 was killed in Bf 109G-6 W.Nr.162418 “‘Red 7’, whilst Oblt. Karlheinz Rentrop bailed out wounded from Bf 109G-6 W.Nr.162262 ‘Red 17’ near Karlovac and got picked up by friendly forces. A third Gustav was damaged, its pilot returning to base unharmed.

As the bomber stream moved northwest, III. and IV./JG 27 made contact with it near Maribor and Lt. Paul Becker of 11./JG 27 claimed a B-24 south of Dravograd at 10.36, and Fw. Wolfgang Döring of 8./JG 27 a B-24 HSS southeast of Maribor at an unspecified time. Over Austria, twelve more Liberators (including two HSS) were claimed by both groups for the loss of a pilot, as five more fighter- and three destroyer groups went into charge. The bomber crews were under fighter attack almost until the target, which was reached shortly before 11.30, and renewed attacks continued on the return journey.

In the meantime, several units managed to land, rearm, refuel and take-off again. At roughly 11.30, I./JG 77 went up from Lavariano, I./JG 53 from Maniago, and I° Gr.C. ANR from Campoformido, followed by IV./JG 27 from Graz-Thalerhof. German fighters caught the scattered Liberator groups with many stragglers near Ljubljana. At 12.05 Stfw. Karl Kühdorf of 2./JG 77 claimed the first one over Kordun, 10 km west of Slunj. The CO of I./JG 53, Hptm. Jürgen Harder, claimed the second at 12.16 east of Šmartno pri Litiji, six airmen being seen abandoning the ship after his second attack. Two minutes later Hptm. Franz Bauer of Stab I./JG 53, who had just been named acting commander of 3./JG 53, accounted for a third one in the area between Brinje and Plaški, and Fw. Josef Kleineheismann of 3./JG 53 reported a B-24 HSS. Next on the scene was IV./JG 27, its Gruppenkommandeur Hptm. Otto Meyer claiming an HSS south of Ljubljana at 12.28, and I./JG 77, Oblt. Bruno Kolthoff of Gruppenstab reporting a victory at 12.30 near the village of Modruš, over Velika Kapela mountain in Gorski Kotar. Oblt. Hans Neumayer of 10./JG 27 claimed another one west of Otočac at 12.32, Fhj.Obfw. Wulf Focke of I./JG 77 made a claim at 12.35 over Velebit mountain, near Sveti Rok village, and Fw. Barthe of 3./JG 77 reported a B-24 down at the same time at unspecified location. In the area of Ljubljana, m.llo. Amedeo Benati claimed an P-38 (which remained unconfirmed) and it was possibly a lone 1st FG aircraft which aborted near the target and got hit in a prolonged chase by three Macchis ‘southwest of Zagreb’.

The bomber gunners accounted for Uffz. Herman Kleinschmager of 2/JG 53, who was killed when crashing near Trška Gora east-southeast of Ljubljana in Bf 109G-6 ‘Black 16’ W.Nr.162571, and Fhj.Fw. Kurt Braasch of 3./JG 53 in Bf 109G-6 ‘Yellow 5’ W.Nr.162403, who disappeared southeast of the city. Just northeast of Bribir, Lt. Bodo Krause of 3./JG 77 bailed out of Bf-109G-6 ‘Yellow 1’ W.Nr.162896. He was captured by the Partisans and two days later brought to Mrkopalj, where he met 1/Lt Richard Munsen, pilot of B-17G-20-BO 42-31472, shot down on **18 March**:

*Hearing voices behind us, we looked back and saw two of our guides talking to a good-looking guy with dark hair, dressed*



**Partisans of 12. slovenačka brigada (Slovenian Brigade) and locals inspect the remains of Bf 109G-6 ‘Black 16’ W.Nr.162571 of 2./JG 53 which crashed at Trška Gora after combating Liberators over Slovenia on 2 April 1944.**  
(Muzej novejše zgodovine, Ljubljana)

*in a spotless, well-pressed German officer’s uniform. Clean shaven, he gestured and pointed to us. We looked like a bunch of pack rats. Ripe with fermented sweat and wearing our filthy flying suits, no one could stand to be near us. The young officer smiled and greeted us in English. He told us he was a fighter pilot shot down by our B-17s the day before. We were surprised to hear him speak English and to discover he knew we’d been flying with the 97th Bomb Group out of Amendola. I wondered if he was the Focke Wulf (sic) pilot who had circled around me the day we bailed out.*



**Another view of ‘Black 16’. Its pilot Uffz. Herman Kleinschmager did not survive.**  
(Vojni muzej, Belgrade)

*We visited with the pilot and discovered he was much like us. He had a family waiting for him in Germany. He was doing his job for the Nazis just as we were doing ours for the U.S. However, regarding our situation with the Partisans there was one big difference. Tito’s followers were protecting Allied airmen, but they were fighting the Germans.*

*The pilot looked at us and smiled. ‘The war is over as far as we’re concerned, fellows’*

*Out of the corner of my eye I saw the Partisans smiling and pointing to the young German.*



**The bent propeller blades of ‘Black 16’, evidence that the engine was still running as the plane crashed at Trška Gora.**  
(Vojni muzej, Belgrade)



36 Mustangs as escort, attacked marshalling yards at Grivita and Chilita. It is known that 6./JG 51 went up from Medoševac at 09.30 and had an inconclusive engagement with 31st FG Mustangs over Romania, before landing at Targoru Vechi at 11.15. After being refueled and rearmed, the Gustavs flew back to Serbia at 12.20. A lone B-24H-15-CF 41-29436 of the 736th BS/454th BG, damaged by flak over the target, was caught and shot down by Obfw. Fritz Liebelt at 13.10, the bomber crashing three km northeast of Prokuplje (1/Lt LeRoy Beck; six killed, one captured, three evaders with JVuO, taken over by Partisans, one later died).

On the 9th, II./JG 51 got involved in anti-guerilla warfare, but this time against predetermined NOV i POJ targets in the area of Leskovac and at the request of the ground forces. Hptm. Rammelt, who led the attack in Bf 109G-6 W.Nr.163356 between 16.05 and 17.10, noted that bombs fell on the target. Back in Italy, I./JG 53 flew to the east, to boost the defense of the Romanian oil fields.

After a longer spell, the 15th AF returned to Austria on 10 May. WNF was assaulted by 175 B-17s and 129 B-24s, whilst 102 B-24s bombarded Wiener Neustadt aerodrome. Escort was provided by 165 P-38s, 48 P-51s and 48 P-47s. German defenses mustered six fighter groups into the air, the first clashes beginning only after the bombers had already penetrated Hungarian airspace. The flak proved very deadly in the target area and numerous bombers were shot down or forced to drop out of their defensive formations.

Led by a Schwarm from Geschwaderstab, I./JG 77 scrambled from Lavariano at 11.58 and made contact with the returning enemy at 12.35 near Sisak. Commodore Oberstlt. Johannes Steinhoff claimed a P-38 southeast of the city at 12.50, but soon he and his wingman Fw. Gottfried Fährmann found themselves on the receiving end of the American fighters' fire, which damaged their planes. They escaped in a northwestern direction, Steinhoff belly-landing at Pleso with W.Nr.161065 and Fährmann losing his Bf 109G-6 near

Ljubljana (it is not clear if he bailed out or crash-landed); both pilots survived unhurt. A second P-38 was claimed by Fw. Herbert Abendroth of 2./JG 77 at 12.50 near Nova Subocka, between Novska and Lipovljani, and a third four minutes later by Lt. Richard Heller of 3./JG 77. The Lightnings were from the 94th FS/1st FG and they were guarding one of the rearmost groups of Liberators and a struggling B-24, when a reported force of 10 to 12 Bf 109s and Fw 190s (sic) attacked them. 2/Lt Keith Miller claimed an 'Fw 190', 2/Lt Robert Van Sice a Bf 109 destroyed and another damaged, and 1/Lt Harley Barlow, 2/Lt Benjamin Hallock Jr. and 2/Lt Cecil Queseth a Bf 109 damaged each. P-38J-15-LO 43-28252 was shot down near Glina, 1/Lt Franklin Lathrope hitting the silk and landing in Partisan territory. He returned to his unit in a little over two weeks and reported that before going down he accounted for two Bf 109s, which he got officially acknowledged. At 13.12 Fw. Hans-Joachim Rühlicke of 2./JG 77 shot down B-24 42-64465 of the 724th BS/451st BG, which crashed near Brinje (2/Lt Ben Moore; ten captured). The same bomber might have been previously attacked by Lt. Hans Tomschegg of 1./JG 77, who reported a B-24 HSS at an unspecified time and location. Three machines of I./JG 77 returned home with battle damage.

After engaging the Americans in the morning, IV./JG 27 dispatched all available aircraft from Szombathely for the second mission at 12.25. Near Maribor, they tangled with some Liberators and escorting Mustangs from the 31st FG. Lt. Gerd Schindler of 10./JG 27 claimed a B-24 in that area but it remained unconfirmed, although B-24H-1-DT 41-28633 of the 747th BS/456th BG, previously damaged by fighters over Austria, crashed near Grad Borl, some 10 km east-southeast of Maribor (2/Lt Harold Aschmann; one killed, nine captured). Fw. Georg Gerdes of 12./JG 27 fell to his death in Bf 109G-6 W.Nr.160862 after a dogfight 15 km south of the city. 1/Lt Raymond Harmeyer and 1/Lt David Wilhelm from the 309th FS claimed a Bf 109 apiece and Lt Adams reported a third damaged at 13.05.



**Bf 109G-6 'Black 20' of 2./JG 53 at Borovo in May 1944.**  
(Josip Novak)



**Curious locals observe Bf 109G-6 'Yellow 6' which crash-landed near Borovo in late spring 1944. The white fuselage band suggests it could have belonged to units based in Italy, 3./JG 53 being a likely candidate.**  
(Josip Novak)

At 18.45 on 13 May, two 32 Sqn Mk.IX Spitfires, which took-off from Vieste, on the Cape Gargano tip, successfully intercepted a pair of 2./NAGr.12 aircraft near Vis, W/O W.J. Smith shooting down Bf 109G-6 'Black 5' W.Nr.162040 north-west of Sveti Andrija island, Obfw. Walter Gutsche bailed out but his parachute failed to open. The second Gustav was damaged by W/O Ian Rankin, seven strikes being counted in it upon return to Jasenica.

The tables were turned on the 14th. Twelve Z.1007s of 88° Gr ACI, escorted by five C.205s of 4° Stormo and three Re.2001s of 5° Stormo dropped 96 containers with 11½ tons of materials for 2. udarni korpus (Striking Corps) at Kolašin in Montenegro. As the tri-motors turned back, their formation fell apart. The leading trio stuck together and returned to Galatina unmolested, as the escorts tried in vain to cover all



**A ZNDH mechanic posing with Bf 109G-6 'Black 5' of 2./JG 53 at Borovo airfield, possibly on 10 May 1944, during the move of I./JG 53 from Italy to Romania, on a leg between Wien-Götzendorf and Pančevo.**  
(Josip Novak)

the aircraft. This only increased fuel consumption and they were quickly forced to leave. It was then that 13./JG 27, coming from Devoli, fell upon the hapless transports in mid-Adriatic. The German pilots misidentified their opponents as Savoia Marchetti SM.84s but this didn't prevent them from being deadly. All was over in minutes, the first Cant fell to Uffz. Josef Plachy at 16.16, Fw. Rudolf Moycis claimed the second at 16.18, Oblt. Hans Caleme the third at 16.19, Uffz. Johann Penz the fourth at 16.20, Fw. Moycis claimed the fifth at 16.23, and Uffz. Franz Stadler the sixth at 16.26. Italian gunners claimed four of the attackers, but in reality only Bf 109G-6 W.Nr.161195 was lost, crashing into the sea 70 km north-northeast of Brindisi with its pilot, Uffz. Gerhard Siegling.

Z.1007 MM 25429 of cap. Cosimo di Palma, commander of 19ª Squa, MM 24929 of ten. Mario Salani, MM 25428 of



**'Black 20' seen from the other side. The first part of the factory code, 'NQ', is still visible on the fuselage.**  
(Josip Novak)



couple more in the days that followed. On the **14th**, a pair of Bf 109s sneaked up on Il 2s of 421. jurišni puk (Assault Regiment), with Soviet crews, over the bridgehead near Dravasabolcs and Donji Miholjac, on the Hungarian border, and shot down the plane piloted by ml.leit. Sidelnykov. One of the attackers was claimed damaged.

During a reconnaissance on a course Čepin - Našice - Barcs - Zagreb - Cerna - Vrbanja on **16 March**, between 14.00 and 15.25, a Yugoslav Yak 1 pilot reported seeing a Bf 109 attack a straggling B-24 over Zagreb. Being at the limit of his range, he was unable to intervene. Still, no US bombers were shot down by fighters over Croatia that day and it is quite possible that the 'Bf 109' was in fact an escorting P-51.

From a rare report available from this time, it is known that on **31 March** nine Bf 109s were engaged in reconnaissance over the Drava bridgehead and a further six in the operational zone of 2. Panzerarmee (Panzer Army).

In early **April** MKHL Messerschmitts left Lučko and flew off to Austria. During their short stay they seem not to have taken part in any operational missions, and instead flew just a couple of training sorties. One Bf 109G belly-landed at the airfield due to a technical malfunction and was left behind. Stab and 1./NAGr.12 were still stationed at Lučko and on **9 April** they reported having 15 Bf 109Gs on strength, 11 of them operational. Interestingly enough, some Hs 126s were also reported on its rooster, and Bf 109Gs in the neighboring NAST. Kroatien. Keeping in mind that the first unit operated the

Bf 109G exclusively for years and the latter mainly the Hs 126, this is thought to have been a clerical mix-up of aircraft types from two reconnaissance Staffeln operating from the same base.

Fighting on the Syrmia Front entered its final phase with the opening of the offensive on **12 April**. The front was breached on its whole length and Yugoslav troops cleared the way for the advance across Slavonia towards Zagreb. Luftwaffe aircraft appeared in just a couple of instances. Three Bf 109s flew at low height over the front line near Lipik on **18 April**. They were met by strong anti-aircraft fire from the guns of 1. baterija (Battery) of PAD/1.JA, which struck one of them and it reputedly crashed some 11 km west of Pleternica.

By the end of the war there were no more events of note involving German Bf 109s over Slavonia or any other part of Yugoslavia. The remaining aircraft of Stab and 1./NAGr.12 left Lučko around **7 May** and moved to Žiri auxiliary airfield, some 30 km west of Ljubljana. On the following day, Yugoslav troops liberated Zagreb. Among scores of aircraft found at Borongaj, Pleso, Kurilovec and Lučko, were three German and one Hungarian Bf 109 at the latter base. On **9 May**, 4.JA found a damaged Messerschmitt at Polje near Ljubljana. The last known flight of a Luftwaffe Bf 109 in Yugoslavia was executed by Oblt. Heimo Emmerstorfer, technical officer of Stab/NAGr.12 later in the afternoon. With Yugoslav troops advancing rapidly, he took-off from Žiri and flew away to Austria. He belly-landed near Haibach ob der Donau at 19.35 and walked away. German troops in Yugoslavia surrendered six days later.



The end: the fuselage of Bf 109G-6 'White 2', once a machine of 4./JG 51, brought from Niš-Medoševac and dumped at a scrap yard in Mladenovac, waiting to be recycled for precious raw materials. Seen behind is the fuselage of Fw 190 'White H' from an ground assault unit, possibly II./SG 10.  
(Aleksandar Radić)

# Chapter 4

## Camouflage and Markings

### Vazduhoplovstvo Vojske Kraljevine Jugoslavije

Bf109E-3as in service with the VVKJ carried a two-tone camouflage, RLM 70 black-green on upper surfaces and propeller blades, and RLM 65 pale blue on the underside. The front cover of the air intake remained in natural duralumin. Main wheels were in RLM 66 black-grey, as were the control panels and gun sights, and the rest of the interior was sprayed with RLM 02 dark grey, as were landing legs and inner gear boxes. All trimmers were RLM 28 wine red, the tail wheel had a white band around the tire.

For all but the first transfer flights from Regensburg, Yugoslav codes and cockades were covered with washable

paint. A temporary German civilian registration, made of black sticker labels was pasted on the fuselage and lower side of the wings, as was the German flag with the swastika on the tail and rudder.

Initially, aircraft carried the 'Kosovo Cross' cockade in four positions on the wings, and an equally divided Yugoslav blue-white-red tri-color over the whole rudder. All stencils were written in black Serbo-Croat Latin letters and each aircraft carried a code of the 'letter 'L' and an individual number on the fuselage, painted in RLM 22 black. There were omissions during deliveries, as the machines were exported upon actual completion, regardless of their production and individual number on paper. Exact data as to which individual aircraft



Lacquerers of Bayerische Flugzeugwerke Regensburg putting the final touch to Yugoslav Bf 109E-3a paintwork. The VVKJ cockade on the wing is made of a white Kosovo Cross outlined in dark blue, 60 cm wide, applied over a light blue/white/red roundel, with a diameter of 54 cm.  
(Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna)





**Crash-landed Bf 109G-4/U3 'Black 4' of 2./NAGr.12 near Lise village in Herzegovina, autumn of 1943. The plane carries standard RLM 74/75/76 camo and a white fuselage band - a feature of Luftwaffe aircraft in the Mediterranean theatre of war. The Balkenkreuz on the fuselage is composed of white right-angled 'flanks' and has no black core, for reduced visibility.**  
(Boris Ciglić)

In order to distinguish friend from foe, RLM 04 yellow was steadily applied on surfaces of German Emils during 1940 and by the time of the Balkans Campaign, the majority of aircraft carried some sort of yellow markings. With a prospect of fighting German-built aircraft, their use was needed more than ever and RLM 04 was hastily applied on most Lft.4 machines. On Emils, these included engine cowlings, rudders, wingtips

and fuselage bands. It seems that there was no official regulation for their use and there were many variations. Some machines lacked yellow wingtips, whilst others had them only on the bottom side, some aircraft sported yellow elevators and in the case of fuselage bands, if applied, they could be found both in front of and behind the Balkenkreuz, their size varying to a high degree. On other hand, 7./JG 26 did not amend its aircraft



**From January 1944 fighter units in the Reich's defense were assigned wide fuselage bands in various trench colors. The overall RLM 74/75/76 camouflage of Bf 109G-6 'White 8' of 1./JG 27 at Fels am Wagram in March 1944 is broken with a bright green band and white rudder. The Balkenkreuz on the wings has no black core, but the one on the fuselage does.**

(EN-Archive)

appearance and kept yellow engine cowlings and rudders and the white 'Mediterranean' fuselage band.

Almost all German Emils carried Staffel or Gruppe emblems, or both of them, and many had the personal insignia of their pilots. Successful airmen marked their claims with bars on the tail or rudder, their size and color varying. In most cases, the nationality of the claimed enemy was marked in a form of a cockade, which was painted on the victory bar or above it, whilst some contained the date of the claim and type of enemy aircraft. Another part which differed significantly from plane to plane was the spinner, which could be found in countless variations.

By the time of the arrival of the first Gustavs in late 1943, many things had changed. Most of the aircraft carried the RLM 74/75/76 camouflage, with an overlap between dark greys that made them blend into each other, and mottled fuselage sides. The once distinctive Balkenkreuze on the fuselage and wings had become more neutral. The outer black squares disappeared, and the center of the crosses could be either painted in RLM 66 black-grey, replaced with RLM 74 or completely left out to form the insignia solely from four white squares. Swastikas also appeared in several variations: black with white outline, black only, or made of white outline. A yellow underside cowling and a 50 cm fuselage band behind the Balkenkreuz were standard for Lw.Kdo. Südost. A number of aircraft sported white rudders and underside wing tips. Some Gustavs of II./JG 51 had the upper coat of RLM 74 and 75 oversprayed with an unknown shade of brown, with dark brown mottles over it - possibly originating from Italian stocks. Units stationed in Austria, and later Hungary, carried Reichsverteidigung markings: JG 27 the green fuselage band and white rudder and II./JG 53 the red band. Spinners were predominantly painted either black, black and white with soft gradation, or had a spiral in one of these two colors.

Interestingly enough, on 3 April 1944 Flie.Fü. Kroatien received orders that German-built aircraft operating under its command must be marked with a white fuselage band and yellow underside engine cowling. This was a sort of reminder as such identification markings had been in use since December 1941, but obviously there was no effort to implement them in full in the field. Especially significant variations from the prescribed rules are known to have taken place within NAGr.12. Very often, its aircraft had no white or yellow tactical markings, whilst a number of its Gustavs were completely oversprayed with RLM 76. There is a known case of a Bf 109G which lacked any insignia at all. This outfit also experimented with a motley camouflage scheme made of RLM 76 covered with a 'meander coat' of RLM 75 and an unknown shade of brown, much darker than the RLM 79.

On 3 June 1944 orders for removal of the white fuselage bands and yellow underside cowlings were issued to Lw.Kdo. Südost, Lft.4 and Flie.Fü. Kroatien. It had been established that these revealed otherwise well camouflaged aircraft during low-level flying. New changes followed after Romania and Bulgaria switched sides, both countries operating large quantities of German-built aircraft. On 21 September Lft.4 ordered that all operational Bf 109s, Fw 190s, CR.42s, Ju 87s, Ju 88s, Ju 188s, He 111s, Do 217s, Hs 126s and Hs 129s must be marked with additional yellow identification markings. These included



**A ground crewman removes the RB 12.5 camera from the fuselage of Bf 109G-4 'Red 1', belonging to Stab/NAGr.12, at Mostar-Jasenica in early April 1944. The aircraft carries the standard RLM 74/75/76 coat and white low visibility Balkenkreuz, which first came into use in 1942. With shiny black surfaces removed, only four white squares remain in the place of the once distinctive and highly conspicuous insignia.**

(Muzej revolucije naroda Hercegovine, Mostar)

a 40 cm wide fuselage band and 'V' shaped 25 cm wide strip on the entire depth of the lower side of the left wing, open in the direction of the flight at a 45° angle and extending 60 cm over the upper side of the wing, enabling recognition from above as well. The order also set a deadline for implementation, 04.00 on 25 September, whereafter any aircraft without new markings approaching less than 30 km from the front line would be considered hostile.

By the time of the introduction of the newest camouflage schemes and colors in the Luftwaffe, very few late mark Bf 109Gs and Ks were deployed in Yugoslavia. On 3 April 1945 the last known regulation regarding the recognition markings was issued to the flying units of Lft.4. The yellow 'V' and fuselage band had to be removed, whilst the black-white spiral on the spinner, a 50 cm wide yellow band around the nose tip and yellow rudder became obligatory for all fighters and reconnaissance aircraft. The order was not difficult to implement, keeping in mind that no more than a handful of Bf 109s were at hand in Croatia and Slovenia.



7:50	104.E	nv IIIk Dragoljub Milošević		shot down by Bf 110, belly-landed on the left bank of Danube near Batajnica
7:50	104.E	kap IIk Božidar Ercigoj		landed back at Krušedol
7:50	104.E	nar Zvonimir Halambek		claimed Bf 110 near Stara Pazova, damaged by Bf 110, belly-landed near Krušedol
7:50	103.E	ppor Otmar Lajh		claimed Do 17, landed back at Krušedol
7:50	103.E	nv IIIk Viktor Ulčar		landed back at Krušedol
7:50	103.E	por Bojan Presečnik		claimed Bf 110 near Stara Pazova, damaged by Bf 110, belly-landed near Krušedol
7:50	103.E	nv IIIk Milutin Petrov		landed back at Krušedol
7:50	103.E	por Dobrica Novaković		landed back at Krušedol
7:50	103.E	nv IIIk Vladimir Gorup		landed back at Krušedol
7:50	103.E	ppor Jovan Kapešić		claimed Bf 110 near Stara Pazova, landed back at Krušedol
8:30	104.E	kap Ik Ivo Novak		landed back at Krušedol
8:30	104.E	por Vilim Acinger		landed back at Krušedol
8:30	32.VG	maj Danilo Đorđević		landed back at Krušedol
8:30	104.E	nv IIIk Tomislav Kauzlarić		claimed Bf 110 near Krušedol, landed back at Krušedol
10:00	1.VB	puk Dragutin Karlo Rubčić		landed back at Zemun
10:30	51.VG	kap Ik Konstantin Antonov	Po 630	transfer flight from Zemun to Veliki Radinci
	51.VG	pnar Branko Čupina		
12:00	32.VG	maj Danilo Đorđević	L-4	damaged by Ju 87, landed back at Krušedol
12:00	142.E	kap Ik Milutin Grozdanović		landed back at Krušedol
12:00	104.E	kap IIk Božidar Ercigoj		landed back at Krušedol
12:00	104.E	nar Zvonimir Halambek		landed back at Krušedol
12:00	142.E	kap IIk Milisav Velikić		landed back at Krušedol
12:00	142.E	nar Ivo Rehak		landed back at Krušedol
12:00	103.E	ppor Otmar Lajh		landed back at Krušedol
12:00	103.E	por Bojan Presečnik		landed back at Krušedol
12:00	103.E	nv IIIk Milutin Petrov		damaged by Ju 87, landed back at Krušedol
12:20	161.E	kap Ik Todor Gogić	IK-3	claimed Ju 87, landed at Veliki Radinci
12:20	161.E	nar Milisav Semiz	IK-3	landed at Veliki Radinci
12:20	102.E	kap IIk Momčilo Milosavljević		landed at Veliki Radinci
12:20	1.VB	nv IIk Karel Štrbenk		attributed claim over Bf 109, shot down by Bf 109, crashed near Glogonjski Rit, killed
13:00	102.E	nv IIIk Đorđe Stojanović	L-44	transfer flight from Zemun to Veliki Radinci
13:00	102.E	nar Vukadin Jelić		transfer flight from Zemun to Veliki Radinci
13:30	103.E	por Dobrica Novaković		landed back at Krušedol
13:30	103.E	nar Miliwoje Bošković		attacked friendly Blenheim, landed back at Krušedol
16:40	6.LP	ppuk Božidar Kostić	L-4	shared Ju 88 and Do 17, claimed He 111 damaged, damaged by Do 17, landed back at Krušedol
16:40	142.E	ppor Miloš Aleksić		shared Ju 88, landed back at Krušedol
16:40	32.VG	kap Ik Krsto Lakićević		landed back at Krušedol
16:40	142.E	kap Ik Radoslav Stamenković		landed back at Krušedol
16:45	142.E	kap IIk Milsav Velikić		landed back at Krušedol
16:45	142.E	nar Ivan Rehak		landed back at Krušedol
16:45	142.E	por Đorđe Kešeljević		shared Do 17, landed back at Krušedol
16:50	103.E	ppor Otmar Lajh		claimed Do 17 and shared a Do 17, damaged by Do 17 and Bf 109, landed back at Krušedol
16:50	103.E	nv IIIk Viktor Ulčar		claimed Ju 88 damaged, landed back at Krušedol
16:50	103.E	por Bojan Presečnik		shot down by Bf 109, bailed out severely wounded near Titel
16:50	103.E	nv IIIk Milutin Petrov		shot down by Bf 109, pilot and plane went missing in the area of Crvenka
16:50	103.E	ppor Jovan Kapešić		claimed Ju 88 damaged and shared Do 17, landed back at Krušedol
17:00	103.E	kap Ik Miha Klavora		landed back at Krušedol
17:00	103.E	nvtč IVk Branislav Todorović		landed back at Krušedol
17:00	103.E	por Dobrica Novaković	L-35	attributed Ju 88 near Belgrade, shot down by Do 17, bailed out near Pančevo, chute failure, killed
17:00	103.E	nv IIIk Vladimir Gorup		landed back at Krušedol
17:10	102.E	nv IIIk Đorđe Stojanović	L-44	scrambled from Veliki Radinci, landed at Zemun
17:45	102.E	nv IIIk Đorđe Stojanović	L-44	transfer flight from Zemun to Veliki Radinci
18:00	161.E		IK-3	transfer flight from Zemun to Veliki Radinci
18:30	102.E	nv IIIk Đorđe Stojanović	L-44	transfer flight from Veliki Radinci to Zemun
18:30	102.E	nar Vukadin Jelić		transfer flight from Veliki Radinci to Zemun
18:30	102.E	nar Vladimir Puzić		transfer flight from Veliki Radinci to Zemun

7 April

10:00	142.E	kap Ik Milutin Grozdanović	L-52	claimed Ju 87, landed back at Krušedol
10:00	104.E	kap Ik Stevan Krajnović		claimed Ju 87, landed back at Krušedol
10:00	6.LP	kap Ik Radoslav Stamenković		landed back at Krušedol
10:00	142.E	kap Ik Svetozar Konstantinović		landed back at Krušedol
10:00	32.VG	kap Ik Krsto Lakićević		landed back at Krušedol
10:00	104.E	kap IIk Božidar Ercigoj		landed back at Krušedol
10:00	103.E	kap Ik Ilija Vlajić		landed back at Krušedol
10:00	6.LP	kap IIk Milan Stojanović		landed back at Krušedol
10:00	142.E	kap IIk Milisav Velikić		landed back at Krušedol
11:00	161.E	kap Ik Todor Gogić	IK-3	transfer flight from Veliki Radinci to Zemun
11:00	161.E	nar Milisav Semiz	IK-3	transfer flight from Veliki Radinci to Zemun

11:00	161.E	nar Dušan Vujičić	IK-3	transfer flight from Veliki Radinci to Zemun
11:00	102.E	kap IIk Momčilo Milosavljević		transfer flight from Veliki Radinci to Zemun
11:00	51.VG	kap Ik Konstantin Antonov	Po 630	transfer flight from Veliki Radinci to Zemun, crash-landed
	51.VG	pnar Branko Čupina		
13:00	6.LP			landed back at Krušedol
13:00	6.LP			landed back at Krušedol
13:00	6.LP			landed back at Krušedol
13:00	6.LP			landed back at Krušedol
13:00	6.LP		IK-2	transfer flight from Zemun to Veliki Radinci
14:00	102.E	nv IIIk Đorđe Stojanović	L-44	landed back at Zemun
14:00	102.E	rez por Miloš Drakulić		landed back at Zemun
14:30	104.E	nar Zvonimir Halambek		claimed Ju 88, landed back at Krušedol
14:30	104.E	nar Veljko Štalcer		landed back at Krušedol
14:40	161.E	kap Ik Todor Gogić	IK-3	shared a Ju 88, landed back at Zemun
14:40	161.E	nar Milisav Semiz	IK-3	claimed Ju 88, landed back at Zemun
14:40	102.E	kap IIk Momčilo Milosavljević		landed back at Zemun
14:50	102.E	nv IIIk Đorđe Stojanović		shared a Ju 88, damaged by Ju 88, landed back at Zemun
16:00	102.E	nv IIIk Đorđe Stojanović	L-44	claimed He 111, shot down by Ju 88, crash-landed near Smederevo severely wounded
16:30	161.E	nar Dušan Vujičić	IK-3	claimed Ju 88, landed back at Zemun
17:00	102.E	kap IIk Milan Žunjić		landed back at Zemun
17:00	104.E	nar Zvonimir Halambek		landed back at Krušedol
17:00	142.E	ppor Miloš Aleksić		landed back at Krušedol
17:05	104.E	nv IIIk Tomislav Kauzlarić		claimed He 111, landed back at Krušedol
17:10	142.E	ppor Đorđe Kešeljević	L-26	landed back at Krušedol
17:15	104.E	por Vilim Acinger		claimed Ju 87, landed back at Krušedol
17:30	161.E	nar Milisav Semiz		claimed Ju 88, landed back at Zemun
17:30	142.E	kap Ik Milutin Grozdanović	L-52	landed back at Krušedol
17:30	142.E	kap IIk Milisav Velikić		landed back at Krušedol
17:30	142.E	kap Ik Ivo Novak		landed back at Krušedol
17:30	104.E	nar Veljko Štalcer	L-15	damaged by Bf 109, landed back at Krušedol
17:30	142.E	ppor Miloš Aleksić	L-10	claimed Bf 109, shot down by Bf 109, belly-landed near Sremski Karlovci
17:30	103.E	nvtč IVk Branislav Todorović		shot down by Bf 109, missing
17:30	103.E	nv IIIk Vladimir Gorup	L-5	shot down by Bf 109, crashed near Gardinovci, killed
17:30	103.E	ppor Jovan Kapešić		attributed claim over Bf 109, shot down by Bf 109, crashed near Beška, killed
17:30	103.E	nar Miliwoje Bošković		shot down by Bf 109, crashed near Kovilj, killed
17:40	103.E	kap Ik Miha Klavora	L-26	attributed claims over two Bf 109's, shot down by Bf 109, crashed near Irig, killed
18:30	142.E	kap Ik Milutin Grozdanović	L-52	transfer flight from Krušedol to Veliki Radinci, crashed on landing, severely wounded
18:30	142.E	kap IIk Milisav Velikić		transfer flight from Krušedol to Veliki Radinci
18:30	142.E	nar Ivan Rehak	L-9	transfer flight from Krušedol to Veliki Radinci
18:30	142.E	por Đorđe Kešeljević		transfer flight from Krušedol to Veliki Radinci
18:30	104.E	kap Ik Ivo Novak		transfer flight from Krušedol to Veliki Radinci

8 April

	51.VG	kap Ik Todor Gogić	IK-3	transfer flight from Zemun to Veliki Radinci
	161.E	nar Milisav Semiz	IK-3	transfer flight from Zemun to Veliki Radinci
	161.E	nar Dušan Vujičić	IK-3	transfer flight from Zemun to Veliki Radinci
	102.E	nar Vukadin Jelić		transfer flight from Zemun to Veliki Radinci
	102.E	nar Vladimir Puzić		transfer flight from Zemun to Veliki Radinci
	102.E	kap IIk Milan Žunjić		transfer flight from Zemun to Veliki Radinci
	104.E	kap Ik Borivoje Marković		transfer flight from Krušedol to Veliki Radinci
11:00	102.E	rez kap Ik Zlatko Dimčović	Bf 110	ferry flight from Kraljevo to Zemun
	1.E	nar đak Gustav Ajdič		
11:45	102.E	rez kap Ik Zlatko Dimčović	Bf 110	transfer flight from Zemun to Veliki Radinci

10 April

	103.E	ppor Otmar Lajh		ferry flight from Zemun to Krušedol
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11 April

13:00	161.E	nar Milisav Semiz	IK-3	claimed Bf 110, landed back at Veliki Radinci
13:10	142.E	kap IIk Milisav Velikić		transfer flight from Veliki Radinci to Krušedol
13:10	142.E	nar Ivan Rehak	L-9	transfer flight from Veliki Radinci to Krušedol, crashed on landing
15:30	142.E	kap IIk Milisav Velikić		transfer flight from Krušedol to Veliki Radinci
15:50	51.VG	maj Romeo Adum	Hurricane	transfer flight from Zemun to Veliki Radinci
16:00	102.E	nar Vukadin Jelić		intercepted friendly Hurricane, landed back at Veliki Radinci
16:00	102.E			landed back at Veliki Radinci

12 April

8:00	6.LP	ppuk Božidar Kostić	L-4	transfer flight from Krušedol to Bijeljina
8:00	103.E	ppor Otmar Lajh		transfer flight from Krušedol to Bijeljina



25.10.43.	13:14	10./JG 27	Lt. Gerd Suwelak	S of Ulcinj	2	P-38	82.FG: 1 P-38 lost, 1 damaged
25.10.43.	13:15	11./JG 27	Oblt. Alfred Burk	N of Cape Rodoni	28	P-38	
25.10.43.	13:15	11./JG 27	Fw. Heinrich Bartels	N of Cape Rodoni	56	P-38	
25.10.43.	13:17	11./JG 27	Fw. Heinrich Bartels	S of Bar	57	Whitley	
25.10.43.	13:19	Stab IV./JG 27	Hptm. Joachim Kirschner	25 km SSW of Ulcinj	179	P-38	
25.10.43.	13:20	11./JG 27	Fw. Heinrich Bartels	S of Bar	58	P-38	
25.10.43.	13:22	11./JG 27	Fw. Heinrich Bartels	S of Bar	59	P-38	9° Gr ACI: 1 C.205 badly damaged, 1 slightly damaged
1.11.43.	13:32	Stab IV./JG 27	Hptm. Joachim Kirschner	16 km W of Bar	180	Hurricane	
1.11.43.	13:35	Stab IV./JG 27	Hptm. Joachim Kirschner	30 km S of Bar	181	P-40	
1.11.43.	13:36	Stab IV./JG 27	Lt. Wolfgang Lang	30 km W of Bar	1	P-40	57.FG: 1 P-40 damaged, 1 P-47 badly damaged
8.12.43.	15:35	12./JG 27	Fw. Heinz Hackl	S of Ston	5	Beaufighter	
15.12.43.	11:15	12./JG 27	Fw. Heinz Hackl	10 km S of Lastovo	6	B-26	
16.12.43.	9:55	10./JG 27	Uffz. Hans Dinesen	Ploče	1	P-40	249 Sqn: 1 Spitfire lost
16.12.43.	10:00	12./JG 27	Fw. Heinz Hackl	north of Trpanj	7	P-40	
16.12.43.	13:20	10./JG 27	Lt. Holger Lumerding	Bojana estuary	1	Spitfire	
7.1.44.	11:41	4./JG 53	Hptm. Willy Krauss	20 km SE of Ptuj	2	P-38	II./JG 53: 15 P-38s claimed (one u/c) 1.FG: 7 P-38s lost, 1 badly damaged
7.1.44.	11:43	4./JG 53	Fw. Otto Russ	15 km S of Ptuj	15	P-38	
7.1.44.	11:45	5./JG 53	Lt. Wilhelm Esser	500 m S of Ptuj	6	P-38	
7.1.44.	11:45	5./JG 53	Lt. Karl Paashaus	15 km S of Maribor	11	P-38	
7.1.44.	11:46	5./JG 53	Uffz. Heinz Lämmel	15 km S of Ptuj	1	P-38	
7.1.44.	11:48	5./JG 53	Obfw. Heinz Grüber	15-20 km S of Maribor	3	P-38	
7.1.44.	11:54	6./JG 53	Oblt. Alfred Hammer	10 km S of Celje	10	P-38	
7.1.44.	12:02	4./JG 53	Oblt. Franz Kunz	20 km NNE of Zagreb	6	P-38	
7.1.44.		5./JG 53	Lt. Wilhelm Esser		7	P-38	
7.1.44.		6./JG 53	Obfw. Rudolf Ehrenberger		43	P-38	
7.1.44.		6./JG 53	Fw. Hans Feyerlein		14	P-38	
7.1.44.		6./JG 53	Lt. Friedrich Steinmüller		u/c	P-38	
8.1.44.	12:36	10./JG 27	Fhj.Uffz. Manfred Hientzsch	70 km S of Lastovo	2	B-25	321.BG: 1 B-25 lost
12.1.44.	7:54	10./JG 27	Lt. Manfred Hientzsch	S of Živogošće	3	P-47	
12.1.44.	7:54	12./JG 27	Uffz. Rudolf Philipp	S of Živogošće	4	P-47	
12.1.44.	8:00	12./JG 27	Uffz. Rudolf Philipp	S of Drvenik	5	P-47	241 Sqn: 1 Spitfire lost
12.1.44.	8:19	11./JG 27	Lt. Paul Becker	S of Split	10	Spitfire	
14.1.44.	10:55	11./JG 27	Lt. Paul Becker	NW of Metković	11	P-38	
14.1.44.	11:03	Stab IV./JG 27	Fhr. Horst Nitschke	S of Hamzići	1	P-38	82.FG: 3 P-38s lost
14.1.44.	11:07	10./JG 27	Uffz. Walter Rabenstein	Korčula	1	P-38	
14.1.44.		10./JG 27	Uffz. Werner Dittmann	Metković	1	P-38	
14.1.44.		Stab IV./JG 27	Hptm. Otto Meyer	Pelješac	11	P-38	
24.1.44.	12:25	Stab IV./JG 27	Hptm. Otto Meyer	W of Skoplje	12	B-24	
24.1.44.	12:30	10./JG 27	Uffz. Werner Dittmann	NNO Skoplje	2	P-38	82.FG: 2 P-38s lost 450.BG: 1 B-24 lost, 1 badly damaged, 7 damaged
24.1.44.	12:30	10./JG 27	Uffz. Walter Rabenstein	NNO Skoplje	2	P-38	
24.1.44.		IV./JG 27	claim by the whole Gruppe	10 km W of Tetovo		B-24	
24.1.44.	15:43	8./JG 27	Uffz. Rudolf Muras	SE of Ulcinj	7	B-17	2.BG: 1 B-17 lost
24.1.44.		12./JG 27	claim by the whole Staffel	40 km W of Bar		B-24	
30.1.44.	12:01	1./JG 77	Fw. Wulf Focke	35 km W of Novigrad	4	P-47	325.FG: 1 P-47 lost (also claimed by 1° Gr.C. ANR)
30.1.44.	12:38	5./JG 53	Uffz. Zobel	S of Grado, Bay of Trieste	1	P-38	82.FG: 1 P-38 lost
30.1.44.	12:43	5./JG 53	Uffz.Helmut Rosenbaum	25 km W of Novigrad	1	P-38	
25.2.44.	11:40	2./JG 53	Uffz. Helmut Vogel	Logatec	2	B-24	
25.2.44.	11:40	1./JG 53	Uffz. Hans Buchmüller	15 km WNW of Kranj	1	B-24	I./JG 53: 6 B-24s claimed I./ZG 26: 3 B-24s claimed 451.BG: 4 B-24s lost 450.BG: 2 B-24s lost
25.2.44.	11:47	Stab I./JG 53	Hptm. Jürgen Harder	5 km NW of Bovec	42	B-24	
25.2.44.	11:49	2./JG 53	Uffz. Erich Gehring	8 km E of Logatec	1	B-24	
25.2.44.	11:50	3./JG 53	Oblt. Walter Seiz	10 km SSW of Logatec	13	B-24	
25.2.44.	11:55	1./JG 53	Uffz. Josef Suss	NE of Gajac, Pag (?)	2	B-17	
25.2.44.		1./JG 77	Lt. Ulrich Pieper		2	B-24	
18.3.44.		2./JG 53	Fhj.Uffz. Helmut Vogel	near Rijeka	u/c	B-24	325.FG: 1 P-47 lost
18.3.44.	9:38	1./JG 53	Lt. Rupert Weninger	Drežnica	10	P-47	
18.3.44.	9:39	1./JG 53	Lt. Rupert Weninger	Dabar	11	P-47	
18.3.44.	9:41	2./JG 53	Uffz. Erich Stricker	near Kamnik pod Krimom	1	B-17	see 2.BG & 97.BG in continuation

18.3.44.	9:45	3./JG 53	Fw. Herbert Franke	Prezid	2	B-17	2.BG: 3 B-17s lost 97.BG: 2 B-17s lost
18.3.44.	9:50	2./JG 77	Uffz. Hans Birk	5 km NW of Gerovo	1	B-17	
18.3.44.	9:50	2./JG 77	Hptm. Armin Köhler	5 km NW of Gerovo	27	B-17	
18.3.44.	9:51	1./JG 77	Oblt. Lothar Baumann	Snežnik	8	B-17	
18.3.44.	9:54	Stab I./JG 53	Hptm. Jürgen Harder	Log nad Škofoj Loko	43	B-17	
18.3.44.	9:54	1./JG 77	Uffz. Gustav Ohmert	Postojna	2	B-17	
18.3.44.	9:55	1./JG 77	Fw. Wulf Focke	Vremšćica	5	B-17	
18.3.44.	9:55	2./JG 77	Uffz. Werner Lang	near Rijeka	1	B-17	
18.3.44.	9:55	1./JG 53	Fhj.Fw. Egon Ohletz	NE of Grižane	2	P-47	325.FG: 1 P-47 lost
18.3.44.	10:00	2./JG 53	Uffz. Bernhard Lamprecht	Trenta	3	B-17	see 2.BG & 97.BG above
18.3.44.	10:15	Stab I./JG 77	Hptm. Theo Lindemann		5	P-38	82.FG: 1 P-38 lost
18.3.44.		1./JG 53	Gefr. Heinz Müller		1	B-17	see 2.BG & 97.BG above
18.3.44.		2./JG 77	Uffz. Ludwig Otte		2	B-17	
18.3.44.		3./JG 77	Gefr. Bertram Steinheuer		2	B-17 HSS	
18.3.44.		3./JG 77	Oblt. Iring Englisch			B-17 e.V.	
19.3.44.	13:02	2./JG 77	Uffz. Hans Birk	near Malo Mraševo	2	P-38	2.BG: 3 B-17s lost
19.3.44.	13:08	2./JG 53	Uffz. Hermann Kleinschmager	Celje	1	B-17	
19.3.44.	13:10	2./JG 77	Hptm. Armin Köhler	between Metlika and Novo Mesto	28	B-24 HSS	
19.3.44.	13:10	3./JG 53	Oblt. Walter Seiz	Mittlern (?)	14	B-17	
19.3.44.	13:12	3./JG 53	Fhj.Obfw. Erich Matthei	Sankt Georgen im Lavanttal (?)	4	B-17	
19.3.44.	13:12	3./JG 53	Uffz. Schimml		1	B-17	
19.3.44.	13:45	2./JG 27	Fw. Gustav Sturm	Lenart v Slovenskih Goricah	9	B-24	454.BG: 8 B-24s lost
19.3.44.	13:46	12./JG 27	Lt. Franz Stigler	S of Maribor	23	B-24	
19.3.44.	13:50	1./JG 27	Hptm. Hans Remmer	south of Murska Sobota	26	B-24	
19.3.44.	13:50	1./JG 27	Lt. Bodo Krause	Polana	8	B-24	
19.3.44.	13:50	12./JG 27	Uffz. Heinz Mellmann	SW of Maribor	1	B-24	
19.3.44.	13:50	12./JG 27	Fw. Gerhard Sonntag	S of Maribor	1	B-24	
19.3.44.	13:50	9./JG 27	Obfw. Fritz Gromotka	near Ptuj	19	B-24	
19.3.44.	13:50	9./JG 27	Lt. Dr. Peter Werfft	SE of Maribor	12	B-24	
19.3.44.	13:50	9./JG 27	Lt. Karl-Heinz Kühl	SE of Maribor	1	B-24	
19.3.44.	13:58	2./JG 27	Uffz. Helmut Beckmann	Jastrebarsko	5	B-24	
19.3.44.	13:58	8./JG 27	Fw. Alfred Strückler	near Frankolovo	9	B-24	
19.3.44.	14:00	9./JG 27	Uffz. Erich Kopp	S of Celje	1	B-24	
19.3.44.	14:02	2./JG 27	Lt. Karl Wunsch	SSW of Varaždin	10	B-24	
19.3.44.	14:02	3./JG 27	Fw. Georg Schanz	NNE of Zagreb	7	B-24	
19.3.44.	14:05	8./JG 27	Uffz. Rudolf Muras	NE of Slovenj Gradec	8	B-24	
19.3.44.	14:05	1./JG 27	Obfw. Adalbert von Lipcsey	S of Celje	1	B-24	
19.3.44.	14:10	Stab III./JG 27	Lt. Hans Schliedermann	Kozje	1	B-24	
19.3.44.	14:10	10./JG 27	St.Fw. Ernst Günther	10 km S of Marinbrod	1	B-24	
19.3.44.	14:10	8./JG 27	Lt. Alexander Ottnad	near Ivančna Gorica	5	B-24	
19.3.44.	14:14	12./JG 27	Lt. Franz Stigler	NW of Cerklje	24	B-24	
19.3.44.	14:15	8./JG 27	Oblt. Kurt Hammel	between Maribor and Zagreb	15	B-24	
19.3.44.	14:40	8./JG 27	Uffz. Hans-Joachim Burkel	east of Klagenfurt	1	B-24	
19.3.44.		9./JG 27	Lt. Dr. Peter Werfft	SE of Maribor	13	B-24	
19.3.44.		9./JG 27	Lt. Karl-Heinz Kühl	SE of Maribor	2	B-24	
19.3.44.		9./JG 27	Fw. Ludwig Haunschild	SE of Maribor	2	B-24	
19.3.44.		2./JG 27	Lt. Karl Wunsch		u/c	B-24	
19.3.44.		2./JG 27	Lt. Karl Wunsch		u/c	B-24 HSS	
24.3.44.	12:02	2./JG 77	Obfhr. Albert Becker	between Savudrija and Bibione	1	B-24 HSS	I./JG 53: 4 B-24s claimed I./JG 77: 2 B-24s HSS claimed 1° Gr.C. ANR: 3 B-24s claimed (one HSS) 450.BG: 4 B-24s lost
24.3.44.	12:03	2./JG 53	Uffz. Hans Holstein	15 km W of Novigrad	7	B-24	
24.3.44.	12:06	1./JG 77	Uffz. Gustav Ohmert	25 km W of Poreč	3	B-24 HSS	
24.3.44.	12:11	1./JG 53	Fw. Arno Fischer	50 km SW of Pula	2	B-24	
24.3.44.	12:11	2./JG 53	Uffz. Helmut Vogel	45 km W of Pula	3	B-24	
24.3.44.	12:15	2./JG 53	Uffz. Heinz Hortmann	50 km WSW of Pula	1	B-24	
2.4.44.	9:35	3./JG 53	Uffz. Karl Müller	near Karlovac	2	P-38	
2.4.44.	9:40	1./JG 53	Uffz. Gerhard Mertens	near Karlovac	1	P-38	
2.4.44.		1./JG 53	Fhj.Fw. Arno Fischer	near Karlovac	u/c	P-47	



4.10.44.	13./SG 151	Kovin a/d		captured by Južnobanatski partizanski odred				Bf 109G-6 100%				
4.10.44.	13./SG 151	Kovin a/d		captured by Južnobanatski partizanski odred				Bf 109G-6 100%				
4.10.44.	13./SG 151	Kovin a/d		captured by Južnobanatski partizanski odred				Bf 109G-8 100%				
6.10.44.	Flp. 1./VIII	Pančevo		derelict, captured by Južnobanatski partizanski odred				Bf 109E 100%				
6.10.44.	Flp. 1./VIII	Pančevo		derelict, captured by Južnobanatski partizanski odred				Bf 109G 100%				
6.10.44.	Flp. 1./VIII	Pančevo		derelict, captured by Južnobanatski partizanski odred				Bf 109G 100%				
7.10.44.	1./NAGr.12	near Lipik		force-landed due to engine failure, captured by 6. slavonski korpus				Bf 109G-8 100%		Obfw. Wilhelm Brust C, EX ?		
18.10.44.	3./NAGr.2	near Belgrade		allegedly shot down by Soviet fighters				Bf 109G-8 200296 100%		Hptm. Fritz Berndt +		
22.10.44.	1./NAGr.12	?		missing				Bf 109G 100%		Uffz. Rolf Voss M		
22.10.44.	1./NAGr.11	near Rovinj		missing				Bf 109G-8/R5 Black 12 202059 100%		Uffz. Thomsen M		
31.10.44.	1./NAGr.12	Rajlovac a/d		swerved on take-off due to poor conditions on the a/d				Bf 109G-8 White 14 710079 95%				
15.11.44.	1./JG 53	?		air combat				Bf 109G 100%				
18.11.44.	1./JG 53	?		air combat				Bf 109G 100%				
18.11.44.	2./NAGr.12	Batina		shot down by Soviet flak				Bf 109G-8 202086 100%		Obgefr. Felix Vock M		
22.11.44.	2./JG 53	returned to Pecs a/d		air combat with 31.IAP La 5s south of Apatin, engine failure, belly landed				Bf 109G-6 Black 7 Cat.B		Obfhr. Peter Esser OK		
23.11.44.	1./JG 53	west of Batina		shot down by 659.IAP Yak 3				Bf 109G-14/U4 White 11 100%		Uffz. Heinrich Schäfer EV → R 5.12.44.		
4.12.44.	1./NAGr.12	?		damaged by friendly flak				Bf 109G White 4		pilot OK		
10.2.45.	1./NAGr.12	Pleso a/d		overturned on take-off				Bf 109G-6 230116 75%				
10.2.45.	1./NAGr.12	Pleso a/d		overturned on landing				Bf 109G-8 White 3 201754 25%				
19.2.45.	1./NAGr.12	near Novska		damaged by flak				Bf 109G-8 202097 10%				
20.2.45.	1./NAGr.12	Pleso a/d		overturned on landing				Bf 109G-8 White 10 200669 40%		Obfw. Hans Wunderlich +		
21.2.45.	1./NAGr.11	Savudrija		crashed due to engine failure				Bf 109G-8 200620 100%		pilot OK		
25.2.45.	1./NAGr.12	near Rijeka		shot down by friendly flak				Bf 109G-6 41080 100%		Uffz. Heinrich Voß +		
12.3.45.	1./NAGr.12	Lučko a/d		crashed				Bf 109G-8 White 5 200318 100%		Obfw. Wilhelm Koch +		
15.3.45.	1./NAGr.12	Lučko a/d		crashed on take-off				Bf 109G-8 201102 50%				
8.5.45.	NAGr.12 ?	Lučko a/d		captured by 2. jugoslovenska armija				Bf 109				
8.5.45.	NAGr.12 ?	Lučko a/d		captured by 2. jugoslovenska armija				Bf 109				
8.5.45.	NAGr.12 ?	Lučko a/d		captured by 2. jugoslovenska armija				Bf 109				
9.5.45.	?	Ljubljana-Polje a/d		captured by 4. jugoslovenska armija				Bf 109				
a/d	aerodrome	Cat.A		damaged beyond repair	EV	Evader	+	Killed		→ R		Returned to Unit
a/f	airfield	Cat.B		damage between 10 and 60%	→ X	Exchanged	→ L	Liberated / Released		W		Wounded
C	Captured	Cat.C		damage below 10%	EX	Executed	M	Missing				

## Appendix 8

### Approximate Comparison of Ranks

Vazduhoplovstvo vojske KJ *		Luftwaffe		USA Air Force		Royal Air Force		Voyenno-vozdushnye sily SSSR		Regia Aeronautica **	
armijski deneral	arm den	General Oberst	GenOb.	General	Gen	Air Chief Marshal	ACM	general-polkovnik aviatysi	gen.polk.		
		General der Flieger	Gen.	Lieutenant General	LtG	Air Marshal	AM			generale di squa.aer.	gen.SA
divizijski deneral	div den	General Leutnant	GenLt.	Major General	MG	Air Vice Marshal	AVM	general-leitenant aviatysi	gen.leit.	generale di div.aer.	gen.DA
brigadni deneral	brig den	General Major	GenMaj.	Brigadier General	BG	Air Commodore	ACom	general-major aviatysi	gen.maj.	generale di brig.aer.	gen.BA
pukovnik	puk	Oberst	Oberst	Colonel	Col	Group Captain	G/Cpt	polkovnik	polk.	colonnello	col.
potpukovnik	ppuk	Oberstleutnant	OberstLt.	Lieutenant Colonel	LtCol	Wing Commander	W/Cdr	podpolkovnik	ppolk.	tenente colonnello	t.col.
major	maj	Major	Maj.	Major	Maj	Squadron Leader	S/Ldr	major	maj.	maggiore	magg.
kapetan I klase	kap Ik	Hauptmann	Hptm.	Captain	Capt	Flight Lieutenant	F/Lt	kapitan	kap.	1° capitano	1° cap.
kapetan II klase	kap IIk									capitano	cap.
poručnik	por	Oberleutnant	Oblt.	1st Lieutenant	1/Lt	Flying Officer	F/O	starshiy leitenant	st.leit.	1° tenente	1° ten.
potporučnik	ppor	Leutnant	Lt.	2nd Lieutenant	2/Lt	Pilot Officer	P/O	leitenant	leit.	tenente	ten.
				Chief Warrant Officer	W2	Warrant Officer	W/O	mladshiy leitenant	m.leit.	sottotenente	s.ten.
				Flight Officer	F/O					aiutante di battaglia	a.b.
narednik-vodnik I klase	nv Ik	Stabsfeldwebel	Stfw.	Master Sergeant	M/Sgt	Flight Sergeant	F/Sgt	starshina	star.	maresciallo maggiore	m.llo.
narednik-vodnik II klase	nv IIk	Oberfähnrich	Obfhr.							maresciallo capo	m.llo.
narednik-vodnik III klase	nv IIIk	Oberfeldwebel	Obfw.	Technical Sergeant	T/Sgt			starshiy serzhant	st.ser.	maresciallo ordinarre	m.llo.
		Fähnrich	Fhr.								
narednik	nar	Feldwebel	Fw.	Staff Sergeant	S/Sgt	Sergeant	Sgt	serzhant	ser.	sergente maggiore	s.m.
		Fahnenjunker	Fj.								
		Unterfeldwebel	Ufw.	Sergeant	Sgt			mladshiy serzhant	ml.ser.	sergente	serg.
podnarednik I klase	pnar Ik	Unteroffizier	Uffz.	Corporal	Cpl	Corporal	Cpl				
podnarednik II klase	pnar IIk	Stabsgefreiter	Stgefr.			Senior Aircraftman	SAC			primo aviere	1° av.
		Obergefreiter	Obgefr.			Leading Aircraftman	LAC				
kaplar	kpl	Gefreiter	Gefr.	Airman 1st Class	A1C	Aircraftman 1st Class	AC1	yefreytor	yefr.		
redov	red	Flieger	Flg.	Airman 2nd Class	A2C	Aircraftman 2nd Class	AC2	lyotchik	lyot.	aviere	av.

- \*

VVKJ non-comisioned officers which passed the officer's exam or graduated at an university received the rank of vojnotehnički činovnik of various classes, which equalled officer's ranks:

brigadni general

viši vojnotehnički činovnik I klase

vvtč Ik

kapetan I klase

niži vojnotehnički činovnik I klase

nvč Ik

pukovnik

viši vojnotehnički činovnik II klase

vvtč IIk

kapetan II klase

niži vojnotehnički činovnik II klase

nvč IIk

potpukovnik

viši vojnotehnički činovnik III klase

vvtč IIIk

poručnik

niži vojnotehnički činovnik III klase

nvč IIIk

major

viši vojnotehnički činovnik IV klase

vvtč IVk

potporučnik

niži vojnotehnički činovnik IV klase

nvč IVk

\*\*

roughly applicable for Aeronautica Cobelligerante Italiana & Aeronautica Nazionale Repubblicana ranks

## Abbreviations

aerodromska četa	AČ	Airfield Squad
Aeronautica Cobelligerante Italiana	ACI	Italian Co-belligerent Air Force
Aeronautica Nazionale Repubblicana	ANR	Italian National Republican Air Force
Aeronautica Regală Română	ARR	Royal Romanian Air Force
bombarderski puk	BP	Bomber Regiment
Deutsche Versuchsanstalt für Luftfahrt	DFL	German Aviation Research Institute
endgültige Vernichtung	e.V.	final destruction of an already damaged aircraft
eskadrila / eskadra	E	Escadrille
eskadrila za vezu	EzV	Liaison Escadrille
Fliegerführer	Flie.Fü.	Flying Leader
Fliegerkorps	FLKps.	Flying Corps
Glavni štab Slovenije	GŠS	General Headquarters of Slovenia
Gruppo	Gr	Group
Gruppo Caccia	Gr.C.	Fighter Group
Gvardeyskiy istrebitelni aviatSIONi polk	GvIAP	Guards Fighter Regiment
Gvardeyskaya shturmovaya aviatSIONaya diviziya	GvShAD	Guards Ground Assault Division
Gvardeyskiy strelkovy polk	GvStP	Guards Rifle Regiment
Gvardeyskaya strelkova diviziya	GvStD	Guards Rifle Division
Herausschuss	HSS	forced out of formation
Infanterie- Division	Inf.Div.	Infantry Division
Istrebitelni aviatSIONi polk	IAP	Fighter Regiment
Jugoslovenska armija	JA	Yugoslav Army
Jugoslovensko ratno vazduhoplovstvo	JRV	Yugoslav Air Force
Jugoslovenska vojska u otadžbini	JVuO	Yugoslav Army in Fatherland
Komanda vazduhoplovstva	KV	Air Force Command
lovački puk	LP	Fighter Regiment
Luftflotte	Lft.	Air Fleet
Luftwaffenkommando Südost	Lw.Kdo. Südost	Luftwaffe Supreme Command Southeast
Magyar Királyi Honvéd Légierő	MKHL	Royal Hungarian Home Defense Air Force
Narodnooslobodilačka vojska i partizanski odredi Jugoslavije	NOV i POJ	People's Liberation Army and Partisan Detachments of Yugoslavia
Narodnooslobodilački pokret	NOP	People's Liberation Movement
Nezavisna Država Hrvatska	NDH	Independent State of Croatia
Operativno vazduhoplovstvo	OV	Operational Air Force
Panzerdivision	Pz.Div.	Armored Division
pešadijski puk	PP	Infantry Regiment
pilotska škola	PŠ	Pilot School
Pomorsko vazduhoplovstvo	PV	Naval Aviation
Primorska armijska oblast	PAO	Coastal Army District
protivavionski divizion	PAD	Anti-aircraft Batallion
Reichsluftfahrtministerium	RLM	Reich's Ministry of Aviation
samostalna bombarderska grupa	SBG	Independent Bomber Group
samostalna izvidačka grupa za daljno izvidanje	SIG	Independent Long-range Reconnaissance Group
Shturmovoi aviatSIONi polk	ShAP	Ground Assault Regiment
Squadriglia	Squa	Squadron
Srpski dobrovoljački korpus	SDK	Serbian Volunteer Corps
trenažna eskadrila	TE	Training Escadrille
wirksam beschossen	w.b.	thoroughly shot
Vadászszázad	V.Szd.	Fighter Squadron
vazduhoplovna brigada	VB	Aviation Brigade
vazduhoplovna grupa	VG	Aviation Group
Vazduhoplovna izvidačka grupa	VIG	Aviation Reconnaissance Group
Vazduhoplovna opitna grupa	VOG	Aviation Test Group
vazduhoplovno-tehnički park	VTP	Aviation Technical Park
Vazduhoplovno-tehnički zavod	VTZ	Aviation Technical Arsenal
Vazduhoplovstvo vojske Kraljevine Jugoslavije	VVKJ	Royal Yugoslav Air Force
Voyenno-vozdushnye sily SSSR	VVS	Military Air Force of the Soviet Union
Vozdushnaya Armia	VA	Aviation Army
zrakoplovno jato	ZJ	Aviation Escadrille
Zrakoplovstvo Nezavisne Države Hrvatske	ZNDH	Air Force of the Independent State of Croatia

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Bf 109E-3a 'L-13'/2513,  
3.PŠ, nar Blagoje Grujić,  
Kosor, April 1941



Artwork by  
Ognjan M. PETROVIĆ

Bf 109E-3a 'L-15'/2515,  
104.E, nar Veljko Štalcer,  
Krušedol, April 1941



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Bf 109E-3a 'L-9'/2509,  
142.E, nar Ivo Rehak,  
Krušedol, April 1941



Artwork by  
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Bf 109E-3a 'L-10'/2510,  
142.E, ppor Miloš Aleksić,  
Krušedol, April 1941



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Bf 109E-7/N 'White 13',  
7./JG 26, Lt. Klaus Mietusch,  
Grottaglie, April 1941



Artwork by  
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Bf 109E-7 'White < Triangle' W.Nr.6432,  
Stab III./JG 54, Hptm. Arnold Lignitz,  
Pecs, April 1941



Artwork by  
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Bf 109E-7 'White 2' W.Nr.109 4931,  
7./JG 77, Fw. Johann Pichler,  
Deta, April 1941



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Bf 109E-3a 'L-53'/2555,  
141.E, Sušičko Polje, April 1941



Artwork by  
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Bf 109E-4 'Brown 1 White < Disc',  
Stab/JG 77, Deta, April 1941



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Bf 109E-4/B 'White C' W.Nr.4196,  
4.(Sch)/LG 2, Oblt. Alfred Druschel,  
Bitolj, April 1941



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