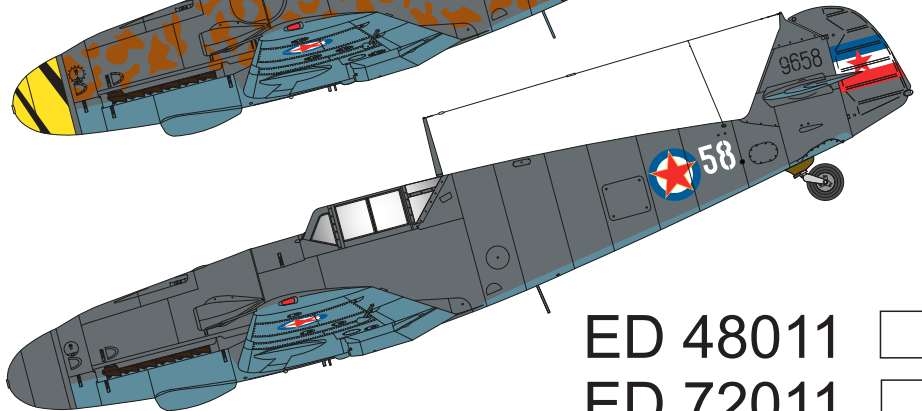
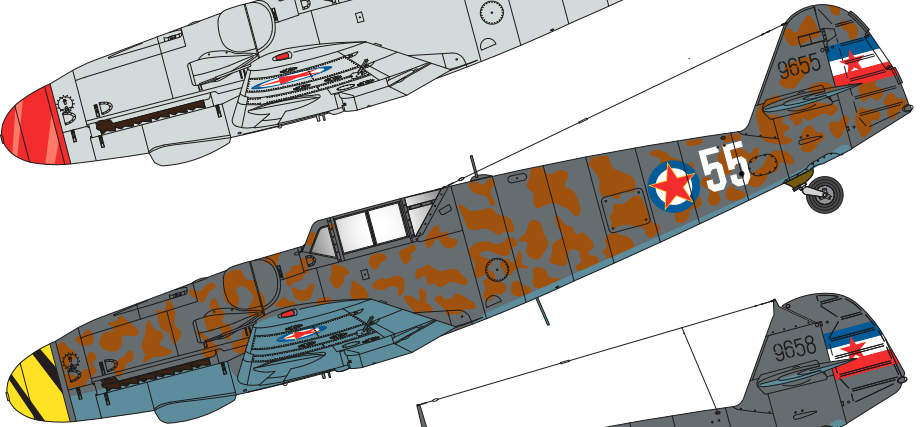
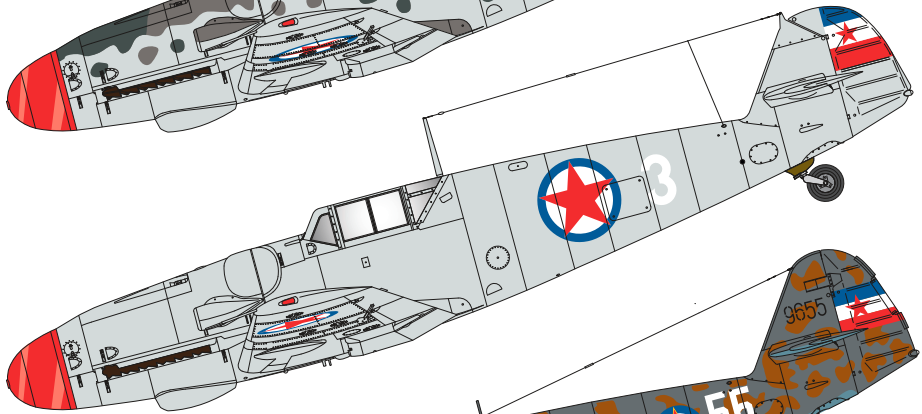




Protectors of the Republic

Me109G in Yugoslav service



ED 48011

ED 72011

Me 109G in Yugoslav service

By the time the guns went silent across Europe, Vazduhoplovstvo jugoslovenske armije (VJA - Air Force of the Yugoslav Army) grew into a mighty battle formation. Two all-Yugoslav squadrons, namely 352 (Y) Sqn with Spitfire Mk.Vs and 351(Y) Sqn with Hurricane Mk.IVs, since October 1944 were handed over by the British to become 1.lovački puk (LP - Fighter Regiment). More significant was transfer of two soviet divisions from VVS to VJA in November 1944. 10 gvardeyskaya shтурмовaya aviatsionnaya diviziya become the 42.vazduhoplovna jurišna divizija (Groud Assault Division) and 236 istrebitelna aviatsionnaya diviziya become the 11.vazduhoplovna lovačka divizija (VLD - Fighter Division). Staffed by former VVKJ (pre-war Yugoslav Air Force), PV (pre-war Yugoslav Naval Aviation), RAF, ZNDH, Luftwaffe and even a few of USAAF and Regia Aeronautica airmen, VJA units were equipped with motley variety of modern and archaic aircraft, originating from east and west, friend and foe alike.

The first airworthy Gustavs fell into Partizan hands on 4th October 1944 at the airfield near Kovin. Beside several dozens of wrecks, seven Bf 109Gs and one each Bf 109G-8 and Fw 190F-8, all previously belonging to 13./SG 151, were captured. Six repaired Gustavs had been allocated to EzV in Zemun (Eskadrila za vezu vrhovnog štaba NOJV - Liaison Eskadrille of NOVJ Supreme Command), which became part of Vazduhoplovna transportna grupa (VTG - Aviation Transport Group) and used time to time for test flights. These Me 109Gs (official JRV name for Bf 109 Gs) still had German camouflage: completely covered with RLM 76 light gray colour or RLM 74/75/76 scheme, with overpainted German insignia. Planes received white individual numbers 2, 3, 4, 13, 14, 15 on the fuselage. Their spinners were oversprayed with thin layer of red paint. Provisional VJA roundels were painted in six position, Yugoslav tricolor with red star was applied on the rudder (narrow or covering whole surface).

The first Gustavs to see active service with the Partisans were ex-ZNDH "Black 3" and "Black 5", which defected to Jasenica aerodrome on 20th April 1945. Both men and their aircraft were immediately incorporated into ME (Mostarska eskadrila) of 3.K JA (3rd Corps of Yugoslav Army). These Gustavs have been lost on 9th May during a bombing mission. At the same time (8th May) in Croatia JA captured quantities of aviation material. Nine Bf 109Gs were found at Lučko, five of them ex-ZNDH machines, three originally from the Luftwaffe and one Hungarian. More than a dozen Bf 109Gs were located at the technical depository of Borongaj aerodrome, but all badly damaged and wrecked which could be used only for spare parts. Two other ex-ZNDH Gustavs were discovered in the workshop in Zagreb and other one (left over by 1./NAGr.12) at Žiri auxiliary airfield in Slovenia. As for the other Messerschmitts in VJA inventory, it is thought that the repainting of old markings and drawing of roundels and tricolors with red star were the only change in their appearance while the camo was left as it was. The 10 planes still operational in 1946 had their new serial in range from 9601 to 9610 painted black on both sides of the fin. These planes were rarely flown, one was reputedly damaged in flying accident by the end of year. Expecting massive deliveries of Soviet aircrafts, in 1947 VJA Command considered the 10 Gustavs and their DB605 engines as nonperspective, struck them off charge and ordered them to be handed over to scrapyards.

And just when it seemed that story of Bf 109 in Yugoslavia came to the end, things turned out differently.

In 1947, Bulgaria offered supply of 108 Gustavs (including 48 ready to flight) and about 40 wagons filled by spare parts to Yugoslavia - according to the Paris peace treaty, Bulgarian aviation was to be radically reduced and all additional planes should be scrapped. This offer was accepted in 1948, when political situation changed and all deliveries from the Soviet Union to Yugoslavia became impossible. By the end of 1948, when Yugoslavia was isolated, 53 single seaters, six two-seater and 15 spare engines were received.

First Gustavs were assigned to 254.vazduhoplovni puk (VP - Aviation Regiment) which previously had been equipped with Yak fighters, and in early September 254.VP becoming the 83. lovački avio puk (LAP - Fighter Regiment). At the end of 1949, when quantity of Me 109G increased, new 172.LAP was established.

Aircraft delivered from Bulgaria received the roundels with yellow-outlined red star on the fuselage and wing undersides, while they retained bulgarian camouflage. It was only in September 1949 that they received a new paint coat: domestically produced equivalent Chromos NT-6022 pigeon gray (similar to Soviet AMT-11) on top and equivalent Chromos NT-6027 pigeon blue (similar to Soviet AMT-7) on the bottom. Some aeroplanes received brown motley schemes on top (from 1950 in 83.LAP and in the first half of 1951 in 172.LAP)

The history of the Me 109G in Yugoslavia ended in 1952. In late March 1952, 83.LAP finally exchanged one iconic World War II fighter to another. It took over 20 Thunderbolts and handed over 10 Gustavs to 172.LAP. But 172.LAP exchanged their fighters three months later. All 31 Bf 109Gs (including six two-seaters) had been stored till March 1955, when these aircrafts were written-off and scrapped. Two of them had survived. One, „white 63" is currently displayed in the Belgrade Aviation Museum, and second ex „white 44" is displayed in Evergreen Aviation&Space Museum, McMinnville, Oregon, USA, in Luftwaffe markings.

info based on Boris Ciglić, Dragan Sacić & Milan Mincevski book „Messerschmitt Bf 109 - The Yugoslav Story vol.II" published by Jeroplan Books



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