

Boris Ciglić

SCRAPBOOK OF LOST AVIATION

Snapshots and Tales from the First Century of Aviation

VOLUME I

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Foreword

A couple of years ago, I had a long conversation with a dear friend - a reputable and well-known publicist from Belgium - on how to update the presentation of aviation history. We agreed that photographs capture attention in an age without much time for reading. Having published more than a dozen voluminous and complex books in the last three decades, he began presenting his research in the form of smaller, unpretentious publications - with short, concise and deeply researched text and a wealth of photos. Intrigued by his experience and ideas, I decided to do something similar. This is the result. Although the work on selection of the stories and their shaping has been relatively recent, the collecting process began in now-distant 1989.

Part of the materials was accessed from archives: Serbian National Library, Historical Archive of Serbia, Belgrade Aviation Museum, Military Museum, Museum of Yugoslavia, Military Archive and Media Centre 'Odbrana' of the Serbian Ministry of Defence in Belgrade; National Technical Museum in Prague; Museum of Contemporary History in Ljubljana; Imperial War Museum in London; and Israeli Defence Forces Archive in Tel Aviv. Other were from the personal archives of former airmen, foremost Orestije Krstić, Živorad Petrović, Dimitrije Konjović, Jean Nicolas, Gvidon Gulič, Federiko Miroslav Gogala Dominis, Janko Dobnikar, Dragomir Lazarević, Vojislav Čolanović, Albin Starc, Suad Hamzić, Darko Perišić and Zoran Radosavljević. A bit of it was purchased, gotten through exchange, or sometimes as a present. Finally, some of the best stuff came from my dear friends and colleagues: Aleksandar Radić, Milan Micevski, Šime Oštrić, Dragan Kolundžić, Mario Hrelja, Dragan Savić, Predrag Miladinović, Danijel Šunter, Nebojša Simović and Vojislav Mikić (+) from Serbia; Marko Ličina from Slovenia; Bohumir Kudlička and Michal Plavec

from Czechia; Bernhard Tötschinger (+) from Austria; Mario Raguž and Robert Čopec from Croatia; Jan van den Heuvel (+) from the Netherlands; Paolo Varriale, Giancarlo Garelo and Roberto Gentilli from Italy; Mathieu Gras and David Méchin from France; Peter Petrick from Germany; Lawrence Nyveen from the United States; Zoltán Czirók from Hungary. A huge thanks to all of them, and especially to David Isby from the United States who was kind enough to review the English text.

The number and variety of topics dealt with has brought some technical difficulties, foremost the question of ranks in air forces from different countries and in different epochs. To make matters simple, all ranks (except in case of United States Army Air Force & United States Air Force) are presented in their British (Royal Air Force & Royal Navy) equivalents with the original form in parentheses when mentioned for the first time. The formation and unit designations were translated into English, but the abbreviations used in the country of origin were applied whenever possible (and logical).

The narrative that connects the 25 stories on the pages that follow isn't solely aviation, but also the former Yugoslavia. My intention was to show that the aviation history in this small and, often, violent corner of the earth was not made solely by the Serbs, Croats, Slovenes or other South Slavs, but also by the French, Austrians, Czechs, Slovaks, Italians, Britons, Germans, Americans, Russians, Israelis and others. All of them contributed, sometimes on the side of good and sometimes on the side of evil, in making of a tiny but picturesque part of the world aviation heritage of the XX century.

Belgrade, 24 March 2019

Boris Ciglić

Tricolor in the Sky

When the members of the Balkan League - Bulgaria, Greece, Montenegro and Serbia - went to war against the Ottoman Empire in October 1912, the Serbian air arm was still in its infancy. Flying Officers (poručnik) Jovan Jugović, Živojin Stanković and Miloš Ilić, Flight Sergeant (narednik) Mihailo Petrović and Sergeants (podnarednik) Vojislav Novičić and Miodrag Tomić had just received their civilian licenses from French flying schools, but there was no time for their advanced training. Instead, they were ordered to buy suitable aircraft, hire experienced pilots and return home as soon as possible. For 500.000 Dinars in gold (at the time one Dinar equalled one French Franc), they purchased three Henry Farman HF.20s, a single Blériot XI Militaire and a pair each of Blériot XI-2 Artillerie and Deperdussen Typ T monoplanes, plus a stock of tools, spare parts and instruments, including clocks, barometers, compasses and three cameras. Together with hired French aviators Raoul de Réals, Louis Godefroy and Emile Védrines, and mechanic François Cornier, they departed for Serbia, but transporting the precious cargo proved to be exceptionally complicated and slow.

On 24 December 1912, defense minister Field Marshal (vojvoda) Radomir Putnik signed the order creating the Aviation Command (Vazduhoplovna komanda), a part of the engineering corps, under the command of Squadron Leader (major) Kosta Miletić and based at Trupalsko Polje airfield near Niš, making the Serbian Kingdom the fifteenth country in the world to have introduced aircraft into military service. Three days later, the aircraft shipment finally arrived; after being stuck in Bari harbour in Italy for weeks, it was clandestinely shipped to Salonika and then brought via rail to Niš.

Within days, the airplanes were assembled and the first national markings were painted on them: the Serbian red-blue-white tricolor on the rudder and on the underside of the wings. By then, only France, Romania, the Ottoman Empire, Greece and Bulgaria had applied national markings to their aircraft. A well-known Russian photographer, Samson Tchernov, happened to be in Niš in late January 1913. Among several shots taken on this occasion (and which are preserved today in the National Library of Serbia) is the one depicting a Blériot XI Militaire with neatly painted Serbian insignia. This Blériot would eventually become the personal mount of Miodrag Tomić. Nicknamed 'Eaglet', it remained in service as late as September 1915.



Flight Sergeant Miodrag Tomić, 1914.

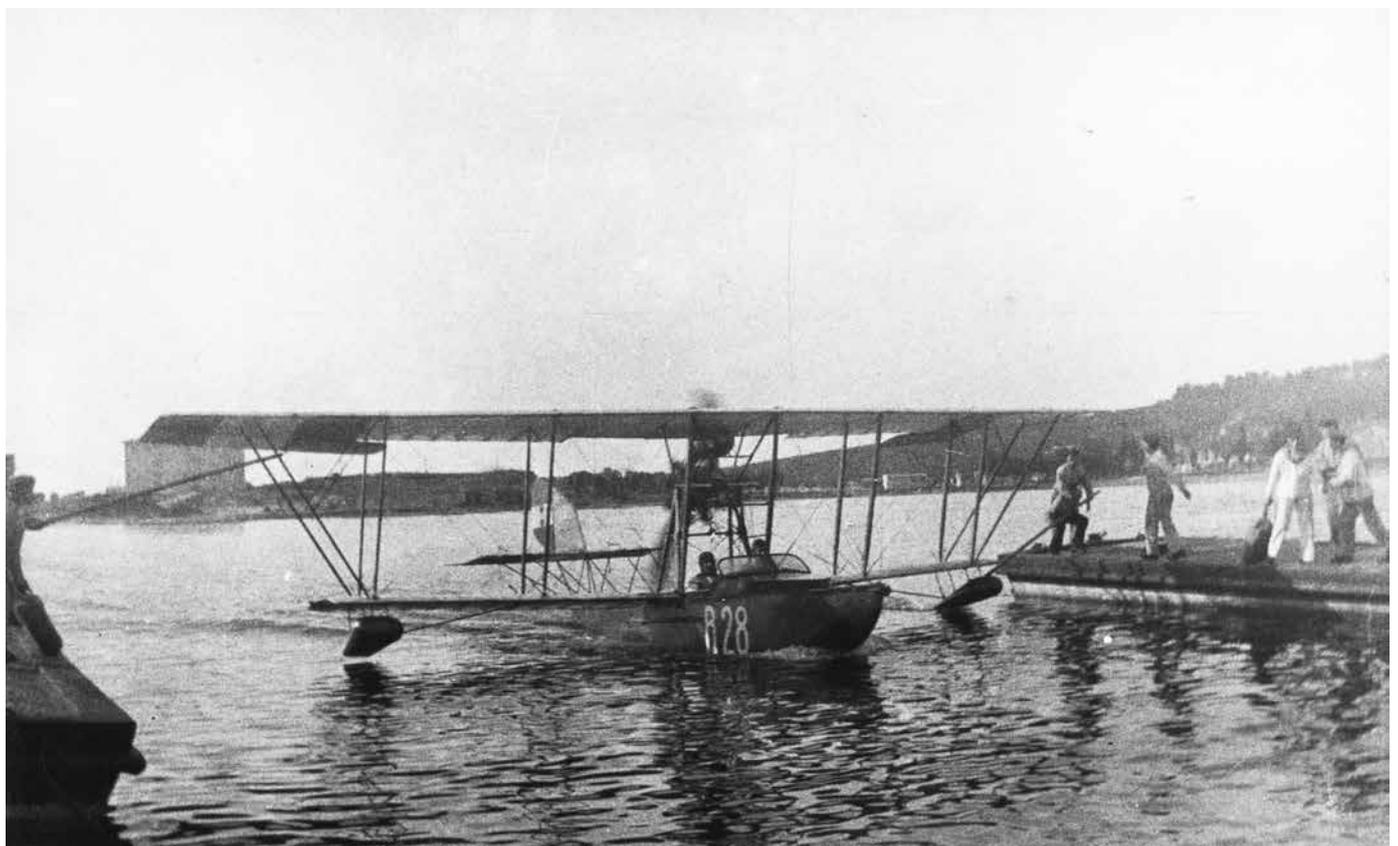


Trupalsko Polje, late January 1913: Prince Arsen Karađorđević (on the horse, in the centre) in front of the Blériot XI Militaire monoplane. Seen behind are Bessonneau tent hangars and a set of wings from a Henri Farman HF.20 biplane.



Lohner Typ M 'L19' taxis across Pula military harbor. Seen behind is a Tegetthoff class dreadnought.

On 1 November 1914 he was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant-Commander (Linienschiffsleutnant) and by that time he seems to have been already sent to a pilot school, in all probability to Fischamend near Vienna. In early 1915 he attended a seaplane conversion course at the Training Flying Station (Schulflugstation) at Cosada near Pula. From July 1915, he was actively engaged in aerial operations against the Italians over the northern Adriatic as a member of the Seaplane Station (Seeflugstation) St. Catarina. On 19 October, Dimitrije Konjović received pilot certificate no.22 and naval pilot certificate no.4 from the Hungarian Aero-Club (he qualified much earlier, however the certificates were not issued automatically after the exam but rather when the graduate could afford to pay them).



Lohner 'R28', one of three Type P flying boats built, returns to St. Catarina in 1915. Type P was similar to Type M, but instead of the 85 HP Hiero Ba. 31.000, it was powered by an 80 HP Rhône 9C rotary engine. As they proved unsuitable for combat reconnaissance, all ended up as trainers. 'R28' was struck off charge on 6 October 1915.

At the time of its arrival in Novi Sad, the main type in the inventory of Flek 1 was the Etrich A.II Taube. Seen here is s/n 72.67, built in Fischamend and accordingly marked with the abbreviation (Fd), which flipped over after a forced landing on a flooded field in the spring of 1915.



Adolf Parýzek survived the war and served for a short while in the air arm of the newly established Czechoslovak Republic. After the demobilization, he continued to pursue his passion for motorcycle racing. He rode his last race in his hometown and finished it despite appalling weather. He caught pneumonia and died shortly thereafter on 21 August 1921.

In 1996, his son Otomar Parýzek, who was just three months old at the time of his death, presented his photo album, assembled between 1915 and 1921, to the National Technical Museum in Prague. The 269 photographs and postcards between its covers include some of the finest shots of aircrews and aircraft taken at Novi Sad aerodrome during the Great War. These were kindly provided by the curator of the museum's aviation section, Michal Plavec.



Personnel of Flek 1 posing with badly damaged Etrich A.II (Fd) monoplane s/n 72.35 in a flooded plain near Novi Sad in early spring 1915.



On 18 July 1917, Pilot Officer Jean Nicolas crashed with a Nieuport XXI C1 near Jenidže Vardar (today: Giannitsa).



Jean Nicolas (in the middle) escaped from this wrecked Nieuport XXI C1 with scratches and bruises.



Nieuport XXI C1 (possibly N1788) of Escadrille N.387 with personal markings - black letters 'JJ' on the fuselage - at Vertekop.



One of just two SPAD VII C1 fighters armed with three machineguns known to have served on the Salonika front.

Commander of Escadrille N.523 and victor in three aerial engagements, Flight Lieutenant Marcel Thirouin in the cockpit of a SPAD VII C1 in the summer of 1917.



An Ace With Many Names

František Wognár was born in Nagyszombat (today Trnava, Slovakia) on 6 January 1890 to a Czech father and a Slovak mother, in the Hungarian part of the Dual Monarchy. Having finished two years of primary and three classes of vocational school in his hometown, on 10 October 1913 Ferenc Wognár, as his name was written in Hungarian documents, joined the 8th Infantry Regiment (Infanterieregiment) of the Austro-Hungarian army. On 22 February 1914 he transferred to the 3rd Fortress Artillery Battalion (Festung Artilleriebatalion) and after the outbreak of war he applied for a transfer to the LSA. Sent to Fischamend on 12 October and then to Aspern, he became a graduated pilot on 12 May 1915 with Flek 1 in Novi Sad. Four days later, he was assigned to Flik 2 of the Air Force of the Dual Monarchy (LFT - kaiserliche und königliche Luftfahrtruppen) - as was the new designation of the Austro-Hungarian air arm -- and on 20 May he was promoted to Corporal (Korporal). He reported for duty at Aisovizza (today Ajšovica, Slovenia) airfield near Gorizia on 10 June. It seems that his flying skills were not considered adequate by his superiors and he was dispatched to Flek 6 for additional training on 18 July.

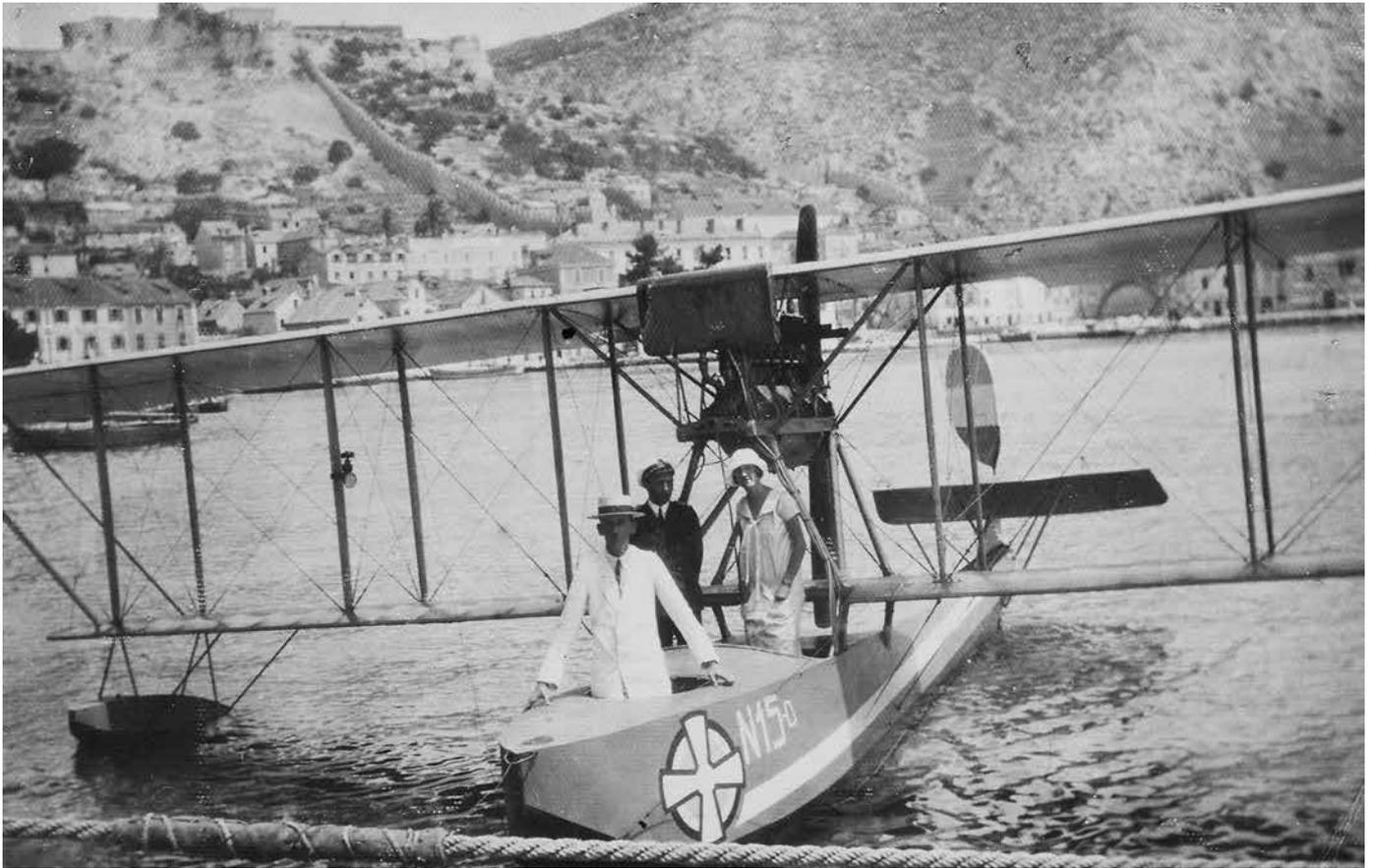
Upon his return to Flik 2 in September, Wognar steadily distinguished himself as a tough and dedicated two-seater pilot and on 21 October he was promoted to Sergeant (Zugsführer). In 1916 he earned his first decorations: Silver Medal for Bravery, 2nd Class (Silberne Tapferkeitsmedaille II. Klasse) in February and the 1st Class of the same order in June. Promoted again (Feldwebel), he became a seasoned veteran, flying the excellent Hansa Brandenburg C.I. Franz Wognar - as he was written in LFT records - started to excel in air combat. Jointly with observer Flight Sergeant (Kadett-Aspirant) Josip Matijević, he claimed a Nieuport fighter on 26 January 1917 near San Floriano, although this cannot be verified from Italian documents. His second victory, again versus a Nieuport scout, followed on 1 May near Monte Sabotino, flying with Pilot Officer (Leutnant) Silvius Frimmel, yet again there is no matching loss recorded in Allied records. On 18 May, he was awarded the Golden Medal for Bravery (Goldene Tapferkeitsmedaille), the highest decoration attainable by a NCO in the Dual Monarchy. Two days later, he scored his third confirmed kill, which almost became his last. Back over Monte Sabotino, a scout identified as a 'Spad'



Sergeant Franz Wognar, 1917.



Corporal Franz Wognar (sitting in the middle) with NCO colleagues during supplementary training in Flek 6 at Fischamend aerodrome, early autumn 1915.



In order to visit his family in Šibenik, Lieutenant Commander Gogala received permission to fly with a crew to his hometown on 11 June 1925. Due to a strong Bora, they force-landed near Lumbarda, and then continued to Korčula. The continuation of the journey the following day was interrupted by a strong headwind so they landed at Hvar, where this photo was taken with locals in FBA Tipo H 'N15d'.



During the return journey on 14 June, 'N15d' stopped again at Korčula due to a faulty magneto. The flight continued after a new magneto and 80 l of fuel were brought in by Lohner Typ TL 'N2bis', but ended with a forced landing near the Bay of Kotor.



The first fatal crash of a LGL B3 in VV KSHS occurred on 23 June 1927, when Pilot Officer Kraguljac perished in no.110.



Wrecked LGL B3 no.17, built under license by Zmaj in 1929, at Zemun aerodrome.

In 1926 the Loire-Gourdou-Leseurre B3 was introduced to the VV KSHS at Novi Sad aerodrome. Test pilots were not delighted with the plane and appraised its flying qualities as modest, nevertheless a decision was made for the purchase of 20 aircraft exclusively for training purposes. Soon the first examples were allocated to the Pilot School (PŠ - Pilotska škola) of 1.VP in Novi Sad, where they kept their original production serials on the fuselage and rudder.

In 1928, the Zmaj aircraft factory acquired a production license and 20 examples were ordered, the series being completed in 1930. During 1933, six additional examples were manufactured, with some minor modifications and improvements. The service of the LGL B3 in Royal Yugoslav Air Force (VVKJ - Vazduhoplovstvo vojske Kraljevine Jugoslavije) - as it was designated after KSHS changed its name into the Yugoslav Kingdom on 3 October 1929 - was marked with frequent accidents. Pilots complained that it was underpowered, nose-heavy and tricky to land. Still, a steady supply of spare parts from Zmaj enabled their long service. The last 13 examples were withdrawn from the Fighter School (Lovačka škola) of 6.VP in Zemun in August 1937, their place being taken by excellent domestic Rogožarski PVT parasol trainers.

Among the photographs presented are those kindly provided by the families of Janko Dobnikar (no.132), Živorad Petrović (Saint Day at 1. VP) and Orestije Krstić (no.134), and colleagues Aleksandar Radić (no.129) and Robert Čopce (no.130 and 137).



A modification frequently used on VV KSHS aircraft in winter months: Loire-Gourdou-Leseurre B3 no.132 of 1.VP with built-in skis at Novi Sad aerodrome.



Airman 2nd Class Relja Nedić (first from the right) next to a Hawker Fury Mk.II in the spring of 1940, at the time when the type was slowly withdrawn from service in 4.LP and sent to 5.LP in Niš.



Ground crews of 4.LP next to Hawker Hurricane Mk.I s/n 2301 at Borongaj. This was the first aircraft of its type delivered to the Yugoslav Kingdom, on 15 December 1938.

Spoils of War at Zemun

When the Wehrmacht entered Zemun aerodrome on the afternoon of 13 April, they were greeted by armed local ethnic Germans (Volksdeutschen), who had controlled it since that morning, after the VVKJ personnel left in haste. The airfield was littered with wrecks of Yugoslav aircraft destroyed in Luftwaffe air raids, but in the hangars, on the apron, at dispersals and in the adjacent Ikarus aircraft factory a rich booty was found: one each Savoia Marchetti SM-79i, Zmaj R-1, Potez 630, Potez 631, Caudron C.449 and SiM X; a pair each of Spartan Cruisers Mk.II, Ikarus IK-2s and Rogožarski IK-3s; three each Rogožarski PVTs, Rogožarski R-100s, Breguet XIXs, Potez 25s and Potez 29s; five Hurricanes Mk.I; nine each Furies Mk.II and Caproni Ca.310s; 10 Avia BH.33Es; 19 Fizzir FNs; a production line with parts for assembly of 20 Blenheims and huge stock of spare parts.

Germans lost no time in picking the most interesting items for themselves and offering the rest for sale. Representatives from Finland and Romania were quick on the scene and purchased what was left of the newer hardware of British origin. Last to come were the officials of the puppet Croat state. Expecting the deliveries of huge quantities of modern German arms, at first they showed no interest in the ex-VVKJ aircraft. However, as the armed struggle against the genocide campaign conducted by Ustasha forces was slowly gaining momentum, it became apparent that this was the only material they could count on at short notice. Eventually, the Germans agreed to sell to the ZNDH all aircraft left behind by the VVKJ across the country. At Zemun, some 25 planes (including eight Furies, four BH.33Es and two each IK-2s and IK-3s) were selected by the Croats and left parked on the southern edge of the aerodrome, known as Bulgarian Gardens (Bugarske bašte), separated by a wire fence from more than a dozen derelict machines at the aircraft graveyard, which were to be scrapped.

At dawn of 22 June, the Third Reich invaded the Soviet Union. While the news of the incredible gains and advances were broadcast over the radio, Luftwaffe ground crews at Zemun became ecstatic. In the following days, Russia became the major subject of any talk, and the general euphoria led to widespread negligence. So it happened at one point that, due to summer heat, the guards abandoned their posts and left the local labourers engaged on clearing duties unattended. After all the wrecks were dismantled, Dragan Reinprecht, a Volksdeutscher from Zemun who was very inclined to the communist movement (and possibly its member) and who had been sentenced to forced labour for failing to enlist into German Culture Association (Kulturbund),



Prototype of the multirole Zmaj R-1, one of the most advanced aircraft designed in the Yugoslav Kingdom in the late thirties. It was eventually cut to pieces at Bulgarian Gardens in late June 1941.

Dornier Do 17Ka-3, RAF Serial AX706

After the capitulation of the Yugoslav Kingdom in April 1941, 18 Yugoslav aircraft managed to reach the Middle East: a single SiM XIV-H, eight Dornier Do 22 floatplanes, four Savoia Marchetti SM-79i, two Dornier Do 17Ka bombers, and three Lockheed L-10A Electra airliners. Thanks to the efforts of the organizer of their escape from Boka Kotorska, Lieutenant-Commander Vladeta Petrović, the floatplanes and their crews were quickly incorporated into 201 Naval Cooperation Group RAF and saw extensive service over the Mediterranean until March 1942. The remaining aircraft were presented to the British on 2 May by the head of exiled government, Air Vice Marshal (divizijski đeneral) Dušan Simović. Why he did this remains a mystery. The RAF was certainly not interested in these machines nor did it ask for them. The decision proved especially harmful for the small contingent of VVKJ aircrew, which lost any chance to practice flying as they didn't get any other aircraft in return. In the longer term, it hurt their morale and discipline and was one of many seeds of disruption which lead to turmoil, ending with the final break-up of what was left of VVKJ in the Middle East.

Some Yugoslav machines were put on charge of RAF Middle East on 5 May 1941 and received RAF markings and new serials: Do 17Ka-3 s/n 3348 became AX707 and Do 17Ka-3 s/n 3363 became AX706. Both planes were assigned to 102 Maintenance Unit and stayed operational for a short time before being grounded and kept at Ismailia airfield. There, they were reportedly disabled in a German air raid on 27 August and officially struck off charge on 12 September.

Both Dorniers had been built under license at the State Aircraft Factory (Državna fabrika aviona) in Kraljevo. Do 17Ka-3 s/n 3348 was manufactured in 1940, in the first block of 16 aircraft and was powered by French Gnome-Rhone 14K engines. During the April War it saw service with 210.E and was the sole survivor from the group of six Dorniers, which were caught by Macchi C.200s of 22nd Autonomous Group (Gruppo Autonomo) on Paramythia airfield in Greece on 15 April. The second aircraft, s/n 3363, was delivered to 209.E in March 1941. It was the first machine in the third production batch and has been equipped with domestic license-built IAM K-14NO engines. The main outer difference between the two planes was in their engine nacelles, s/n 3348 sporting the short type ending before the flaps, and s/n 3363 the long type extending over the trailing edge of the wing.



Dornier Do 17Ka-3 AX706 of 102 Maintenance Unit, with RAF markings on its wings, fuselage and tail, and large crowd at Shalufa aerodrome in summer 1941.



Minutes later, the take-off run of the Hs 126B-2 ended with a crash. The most common cause of such accidents was a swerve during the run, either due to pilot error or strong winds, and overwhelming pressure leading to break-up of one of the landing gear legs.



According to preserved Luftwaffe loss return documentation, in May 1943 NAST. Kroatien struck off charge two of its Henschels (W.Nr.3222 and W.Nr.3161). For reasons unknown, the accident of Hs 126B-2 W.Nr.4361 was not recorded.



**Burned-out Dornier Do 17E, one of 10 aircraft of that type destroyed in the raid.
The Croat chessboard, ZNDH insignia, is clearly visible on the tail.**



**Wrecks littered Rajlovac aircraft graveyard after the bold strike of the 1st Krajina Brigade.
Lying in the foreground is the tail section of Dornier Do 17E-1 W.Nr.3031 s/n 0305 of 7.ZJ.**

Cants over Montenegro

The armistice declared by the Italian government on 8 September 1943 caught completely off guard most of the Italian forces in Yugoslavia. Although the Germans were well-prepared for the event, lack of troops forced them to concentrate their efforts on disarming their former allies and taking over the coastal belt and large towns. Partisan units were quick in filling in the gap and got hold of huge stocks of arms and supplies, as well as of large areas of Montenegro, Croatia and Slovenia. The following months were marked by bitter battles for the 'Italian heritage', but the new strength accumulated by the NOVJ brought a definitive change on the Balkan battlefield.

When the news of armistice reached Montenegro, the 19th Infantry Division (Divisione fanteria) 'Venezia' was deployed in the area of Berane and Andrijevica, and the 1st Mountain Division (Divisione alpina) 'Taurinese' in the region Nikšić - Vilus, with some 24.000 troops. Both units refused to surrender to the Germans and recognized the government of General Pietro Badoglio, joining the 2nd Striking Corps (udarni korpus) of the NOVJ. It took more than a month before the Italian troops established a secure radio link with the supreme command back home: on 12 October a cipher was dropped from a plane at Berane, where four days later the first aircraft of Italian Co-Belligerent Air Force (ACI - Aeronautica Cobelligerante Italiana) landed to get first-hand information about the conditions on the ground. This marked the beginning of a serious effort by the ACI to support its forces and their new allies in Montenegro. The task of supplying the ground forces from the air fell to Bomber and Transport Grouping (Raggruppamento Bombardamento e Trasporto) and proved very difficult. Due to bad weather and difficult terrain, only 45 successful sorties were accomplished by the end of the year. In the meantime, 'Venezia' and 'Taurinese' were going through hell, losing some 40% of their men in combat. Eventually, on 2 December, the remaining troops were incorporated into the new Italian Partisan Division (Divisione italiana partigiana) 'Garibaldi'.

Back in Italy, in mid-December, 25 Cant Z.1007 trimotors were recalled from Sardinia to Galatina aerodrome near Lecce, where they equipped the reformed 88th Group (Gr - Gruppo), with 19^a, 190^a, 260^a and 265^a Squa. A few bombing raids over the Albanian coast were flown by the Cants before they were converted into transports. After acquiring special containers for air drops from the Allies, Z.1007s started combat flights over Montenegro on 3 March 1944: six planes delivered 36 containers with



Cants Z.1007ter from 190^a Esc of 88^o Gr ACI escorted by Macchi C.205 fighters. Adverse weather conditions over Montenegro caused problems for Italian pilots.

Curious Partisans observe the 450th BG Liberator, the first Allied bomber to land at Vis island.



home, but it became apparent that they would not be able to hold it much longer. Briefed that Vis was in friendly hands, the crew decided to give it a go and upon reaching the Adriatic shore, slightly altered course to the southeast.

The Liberator touched down at Pliško Polje at exactly 14.00, skidding on its belly through the grapevines before coming to a halt in a cloud of dust. While the Partisan and RN commandos rushed to the scene to help, American aviators already exited the plane; no one suffered even a scratch. On 4 April, they were evacuated to Bari aboard a RN landing craft infantry and the next day reported to the headquarters of the 450th BG. The lucky crew of Claude McIver included 2nd Lieutenants Ralph McSloy (co-pilot), Frank Hunter (navigator) and William Ramshaw (bombardier), Technical Sergeant Paul Bear (radio-operator), and Staff Sergeants John Hortel (nose gunner), Orie Graves (ball turret gunner), William Mills and John Dolida (waist gunners), and Harold Adams (tail gunner). All of them subsequently completed their combat tours and returned to the States. As for their s/n 42-78084, it was plucked of all usable parts and eventually scrapped.

The arrival of the first Allied aircraft at the Partisan fortress in the Adriatic has been captured by an unknown combatant of the 26th Dalmatian Division, his photos being preserved today in Museum of Yugoslavia (top) and Military Museum in Belgrade.



Combatant of the 26th Dalmatian Division with Liberator s/n 42-78084 behind him. Work on the airfield at Plaško Polje ended on 25 April: the runway was 40 m wide and 850 m long, with 150 m safety extensions on both ends.

two SOE operatives and a captured German officer. This was the first landing of an Allied aircraft in occupied Yugoslavia, and interestingly, it was done by Wing Commander Selby, who took controls from the US pilot en route to the target. As the Dakota flew away, Selby stayed behind as the highest-ranking officer in the SOE mission to the NOVJ Supreme Command.

When Brigadier Maclean returned to Yugoslavia on 20 February, Selby participated in negotiations with Marshal (maršal) Josip Broz Tito about training Yugoslav airmen and the creation of all-Yugoslav squadrons within RAF. The protocol signed on 12 March 1944 in Drvar named him as responsible for adjusting the RAF training curriculum for Yugoslav aircrews in the Middle East and the selection of pilots for the first operational unit. Sent back to Egypt, he became the driving force behind the emerging contingent of Yugoslav aviators within RAF. Already on 22 April, mainly thanks to his great effort, 352 (Yugoslav) Sqn was formed at Benina in Libya.

During the summer, Selby returned to his air liaison duties in Maclean's Mission. From time to time, he could be found at various airfields in Yugoslavia, always coming in with his personal Hurricane Mk.IV with the letters 'JB•S' on the fuselage. Pilots of 352 (Y) Sqn, which he selected, escorted him on several special missions in early September. On the 1st a pair of Spitfires escorted him to the Stari Trg landing ground, located some 50 km north of Rijeka, and back to Canne the next day; on the 5th they followed him to Berane in Montenegro, and four days later as he flew from Sanski Most to RAF Station Vis.

In the night of 20-21 September, 13th Krajina Striking Brigade (krajiška udarna brigada) liberated Zalužani aerodrome near Banja Luka, and found some 30 ZNDH aircraft, seven of them operational. Partisans immediately decided to press the captured planes into service and established an improvised aviation base. Few days later, possibly on the 25th or 26th, Selby came in with his 'JB•S'. He caught the attention of a member of the base command, Flying Officer (poručnik) Pero Zdjelar, who took a snapshot of his Hurricane. When the German 68th Army Corps (Armeekorps) advanced towards Banja Luka, Partisans decided to abandon Zalužani on 27 September. While taxiing, 'JB•S' nosed-in after its wheels stuck in soft ground. The damage was minor but sufficient to render the plane useless. He set the Hurricane on fire and retreated on foot to Sanski Most. Few days later, he returned to Italy aboard a C-47.

After the liberation of Belgrade, Selby was spending most of his time in the Mission HQ in the Yugoslav capital. Nonetheless, at the nearby Zemun aerodrome, a Hurricane Mk.IV, borrowed from 6 Sqn, was always kept at readiness. In February 1945, aircrews of the Liaison Escadrille (Eskadrila za vezu) of NOVJ Supreme Command used this plane as the background of a remembrance photo.

John Beauchamp Selby left RAF in 1947 with the rank of Group Captain. He returned to BBC and became Director of European Programmes with the Overseas Service, before pursuing a successful business career. He retired in 1978 and lived in France. He passed away in 1990.



Members of Liaison Escadrille VŠ NOVJ with Wing Commander Selby's Hurricane Mk.IV at Zemun aerodrome in February 1945. The aircraft carries two 44 gallon auxiliary drop tanks. Seen behind is the left wing tip of the trophy Ju 52, which was captured by Partisans at Kapino Polje on 4 November 1944.



Ground crews filling the tanks of a Yak 1b with fuel, while a group of pilots and mechanics pose for Dragomir Lazarević. An interruption in fuel supply in late April 1945 significantly reduced activities of the 11.VLD.



Yugoslav pilots with Yak 1b 'Yellow 47' at Ruma airfield, March 1945.



Minor accident to a Yak 1b. This was probably the mishap of Sergeant Ivan Kiseljak on 6 March 1945.



Mechanics working on the 1.210 HP Klimov VK-105PF engine of a TLK Yak 1b.



Ground crews adjusting Yak cowlings in the field workshop at Ruma airfield.



Ilyushin UII-2 'White 0' two-seater trainer with its engine running ready for a flight. The plane has a red star painted on the frontal part of the spinner - which has its aft part also painted red.



The crew is awaiting take-off clearance at the start of the runway. From late 1944 till 1955, when the last examples were withdrawn from service, 36 UII-2 two-seaters went through VJA and JRV inventory.



Spitfire LF Mk.IXE with auxiliary fuel tanks at Kapino Polje during 'Velvetta II'.



Israeli technicians taking a morning 'bath' at Kapino Polje, December 1948.

a Curtiss C-46 two months later. With JRV markings washed over and stars of David in white discs painted, the remaining five planes flew away three days later, led by a Douglas C-54 on a 2.250 km journey. Just three, piloted by Sam Pomerance, Syd Cohen and Jack Cohen, reached Ramat David after a flight of six h and 45 min. Two landed at Maritza aerodrome on Rhodes island due to problems with their long range fuel tanks and were confiscated (one would be returned to Israel in 1950). Their pilots, Boris Senior and Modi Alon, were held in custody until 12 October. With cover blown, and after US diplomatic protests, Yugoslavia withdrew its permission for further flights.

By early December, the Yugoslav attitude changed, possibly after Israel paid its debt of 600.000 USD for previously provided goods and services and the advance for 'Velvetta II'. The first batch of 10 planes was sent via rail to Yugoslavia, and then loaded on a ship, together with a large stock of arms. Following were six Spitfires which used the air route. They left Kunovice on 18 December, but over Yugoslavia they hit a snowstorm. The leading figure behind the operation, Sam Pomerance, was killed in a crash in Bosnia; a second plane crash-landed in Herzegovina, its pilot Bill Pomerantz escaped unhurt. Eventually, the rest turned back to Czechoslovakia. On the 19th and 20th, two flights of six planes successfully reached 'Alabama'. Four Spitfires with the stars of David left on 23 December: George Lichter, Daniel Shapira and Moti Fein made it to Tel Nof aerodrome and Caesar Dangott to Chatzor. On the 26th, six more Spitfires, piloted by Jack Cohen, George Sinclair, Arnold Ruch, Alexander Jacobs, Bill Schroeder and Aaron Finkel, followed a C-46 to Israel and all reached their destination after a five and a half hour flight. The two planes which developed problems during a flight to Kapino Polje were dismantled and loaded aboard C-46s on 28 December. The last act of Operation 'Velvetta' was the flight home from 'Alabama' of the Israeli ground crews aboard a C-46 on 5 January 1949. With Israeli Defence Forces strengthened, all future arms exports went over a safer route, loaded on 'Trans-Jug' cargo ships in Split and Rijeka harbours.

Although under the watchful eye of Yugoslav State Security Service, several of the participants in 'Velvetta' had their cameras with them at Kapino Polje. Two of the photographs (left and above left) originate from the Israeli Defence Forces Archives at Tel-Hashomer. The others were provided by Lawrence Nyveen, aviation historian from the United States, who got them from one of the participants in the operation, Aaron Finkel.



With provisional Yugoslav markings on the fuselage covered, Spitfire LF Mk.IXEs are about to get Stars of David during 'Velvetta II' at Kapino Polje.

Positioned in line, with engines switched-off, canopies of the Lockheeds are slowly raised.



T-33A-1-LO s/n 51-6524 and s/n 51-6527 remained at Batajnica until 12 March 1953, when they were flown back to France by USAF pilots.



US Military Attaché and USAF pilots standing to attention before the official hand-over of the T-33As.



US Military Attaché shakes hands with USAF aircrews after their successful flight to Batajnica.

Hunting Uranium

During the fifties, Yugoslavia started a search for radioactive raw materials, in an effort to develop a sustainable nuclear programme. The search for uranium 'on foot', with Geiger-Müller counters, proved difficult and slow, and a new method - aerial prospecting - sounded more promising. After several scientists of the Federal Geological Institute (SGZ - Savezni geološki zavod) completed a course on aerial radiometry in the Soviet Union in 1957, an ACGM-25 detector was acquired and installed on a JRV Sikorsky S-51 of the 27th Helicopter Escadrille (he - helikopterska eskadrila). The trials, conducted in 1958, led to a decision to purchase choppers dedicated solely for prospecting. The SGZ ordered a pair of Italian-built Augusta Bell AB 47J Rangers, powered by a Lycoming VO-435-A1D engine. The helicopters, production no.1052 and 1055, were delivered in the spring of 1959. They were incorporated into the general fleet of the Yugoslav Airways (JAT - Jugoslovenski aerotransport) and were assigned civilian registrations: 'YU-HAC' made its debut flight from Zemun aerodrome on 4 May and 'YU-HAD' followed two days later. After some testing over Avala Mountain and the area of Krupanj in Serbia in June, in early July, the Rangers were sent to Macedonia, where they flew until November. They accumulated the highest number of flying hours in the whole JAT general aviation fleet for that year: 198 hours by 'YU-HAC' and 189 by 'YU-HAD'. As maintenance in the field proved too complicated and costly for JAT, on 13 February 1960 both helicopters were put on the roster of the Air Force and Anti-aircraft Defence (RV i PVO - Ratno vazduhoplovstvo i protivvazdušna odbrana) - as was the new designation of Yugoslav air arm since 1959 - and received s/n 11561 and 11562. They were assigned to the Section for Aerial Prospecting (Odeljenje za prospekciju iz vazduha) of the 27.he (renamed 783.he in March 1961). The section was strengthened by a third Ranger (no.1109; s/n 11563) in May, but it was written-off after a flying accident on 16 June near Kuršumlijska Banja. As a replacement, no.1117 came from Italy in October; it received s/n 11564.

A pair of Rangers were used for aerial radiometry and were equipped with US ASC-10 and French SPA-3 detectors. The third served as a platform for combined aeromagnetic and radiometric research with the old ACGM-25 device, Gama probe, and 72 Geiger-Müller counters. The aerial prospecting missions were very demanding. Field teams were usually made of four pilots and three mechanics with two Rangers, three geologists and a technician who serviced the detectors, and a few men of the support staff. The requested altitude for prospecting was 50 m, no matter whether over level or mountainous terrain. On average, four flights per day were made, each over two hours long. Difficult missions extracted a heavy toll on the small fleet. On 31 May 1963,



Geologists of SGZ next to AB-47J Ranger s/n 11562 at a football field in Bugojno, September 1961. Out of five AB-47Js purchased between 1959 and 1963, three were lost in flying accidents before the withdrawal of the type from the JRV in 1967.

Hectic Day at Zemunik

Based at Zemunik near Zadar and subordinate to the Air Force Academy (VVA - Vazduhoplovna vojna akademija), the 172. Fighter-bomber (Training) Regiment [lovačko-bombarderski avio puk (školski)] ranked among the best units of RV i PVO in mid-sixties. The main responsibility of Wing Commander Kosta Mićović and his men was the training of cadets in their final year at the academy and, on 4 October 1965, the practical flight training programme for the pupils of the 18th VVA class has been initiated.

After completion of the instrument flight rules (IFR) course on Lockheed TV-2s, in early 1966, the young aviators started flying lessons on Republic F-84G Thunderjet fighter-bombers. During the flying season, the regiment amassed some 6.000 flying hours, but in doing so suffered seven accidents: a pair of TV-2s and one F-84G were damaged and four Thunderjets were write-offs. The most serious was the crash of F-84G s/n 10675 near Bosanski Petrovac on 16 May, which took the life of Sergeant (vodnik I klase) Milan Bubulj.

One F-84G was wrecked and another damaged on 18 August in the space of just three hours, but luckily no one was hurt. It was 10.00 when Sergeant Milorad Marjanović approached the concrete runway at Zemunik after exercises over Benkovac training ground, flying s/n 10551. He was some 500 ft lower than required in his fourth landing circuit, and although warned by the flight controller, he replied that he had sufficient speed. His Thunderjet touched down 100 m past the runway threshold, left of the centerline, with almost imperceptible left traverse. Fearing that he might catch up and hit the aircraft which landed in front of him, after running for some 450 m, Marjanović pressed the brakes, applying greater pressure on the left one. As he held the brakes longer and harder than normal, the left tire exploded and fell off the wheel. The plane abruptly veered to the left and, after leaving the runway, the left landing gear leg sank into the ground, while the right one collapsed. When the plane came to a halt, the trainee switched off the engine and exited the cockpit. F-84G s/n 10551 was quickly moved away, as plenty of other flying activities were scheduled that day.

After a successful training flight over Benkovac polygon, Sergeant Milan Buljan returned to Zemunik at 13.00. His approach was flawless. Upon landing, after applying brakes, he suddenly felt the left pedal sinking without any resistance. He pressed again and concluded that it was non-functional. Fearing that the plane would swerve, he stopped braking and continued with the lan-



Republic F-84G Thunderjet s/n 10595 of Sergeant Milan Buljan stuck on its nose at Zemunik aerodrome, 18 August 1966. Between 1953 and 1974, 230 Thunderjets went through JRV i.e. RV i PVO inventory.



Nose section of the 'Niner' ('Devetka' in Serbo-Croat slang) in the cornfield, 2.570 m southeast from the threshold of the Surčin airport.



Burned-out tail section of 'YU-AJN'. The location where the plane stopped and caught fire is in today's Belgrade suburb of Ledine.

It flew over the canal and hit the ground again with both landing gear legs. As it continued to run along the ground, 575 m after its first touch-down, the plane turned through 120° and, with landing gear torn-off, came to a halt on its fuselage. After the tanks were pierced, fuel was spilling behind it and was ignited by jet exhaust. The flames followed the plane until they caught up as it came to rest. The plane lost electric power. The evacuation took place by the light of the fire. After it was verified that all passengers had left the airliner, the crew came out last. The angry and scared passengers broke through the muddy fields to Bežanija, from where they were transferred with a bus to the 'Nacional' hotel for further care. Firefighters arrived at Vinogradska Street in Bežanija at 18.45, 1.500 m from the burning wreck, but could not get closer because of the soft and rugged terrain, cut with canals.

The crew's estimate that the visibility was greater than 2.500 m proved to be in error. Vertical visibility at 4,500 ft was several times greater than horizontal visibility. As the DC-9 lost altitude, the captain and co-pilot lost visual contact with the runway. This caught them unprepared and they were confused. Nevertheless, they continued with the approach, expecting to re-establish visual contact, unaware of the loss of altitude. Petar Mićunović was stripped of his authority as a route instructor and lost his captain's title for six months. Branislav Rusković lost his airline pilot license. Milisav Milutinović was censured for leaving the crew during the evacuation. Flight attendants Anđelka Pandić, Milica Panić, Izabela Novosel, and the pilot Adam Anđelković, who was in the passenger cabin, were commended for their efforts during the evacuation.

Official accident report of DC-9-32 'YU-AJN' with accompanying photographs has been made available by Mario Hrelja.



DC-9-32 'YU-AJN' was manufactured in 1973 and cost 5.250.000 USD. Its flight certificate (no.939) was issued on 23 May 1973 and renewed on 23 April 1974.

'L's' at Slatina

In accordance with the ambitious reorganization programme of the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA - Jugoslovenska narodna armija) launched in 1959, the RV i PVO invested a lot of effort and funds in the expansion of its infrastructure. Existing bases were enlarged, underground shelters were built and new aerodromes were constructed. The huge aerodrome complex Željava near Bihać became the symbol of the JNA endeavour to prepare for a potential nuclear war, at the same time a smaller version was built in the foothills of Goleš Mountain near Priština.

Slatina aerodrome was in final phase of construction when, on 6 October 1972, RV i PVO Command issued orders for the re-designation of the 83rd Fighter Regiment (lap - lovački avijacijski puk) to the 83rd Fighter Aviation Brigade (lovačka avijacijska brigada) and its transfer to the new base. This unit, established in 1968 at Skopski Petrovac, has completed the transition from North American F-86Ds to Mikoyan Gurevich MiG 21F-13s - designated in Yugoslavia as L-12 ('L' standing for 'lovac' - fighter) - and two-seater MiG 21Us, i.e. NL-12 ('NL' for 'nastavni lovac' - fighter trainer) the previous year. On 18 October, Wing Commander Angel Ončevski lead the MiGs of 123rd and 130th Fighter Escadrille (lae - lovačka avijacijska eskadrila) to Slatina. The transfer of other elements of his brigade was completed in February 1973. Life in the new environment brought with it many problems. There was no suitable accommodation for the personnel and their families and finding employment for their wives was difficult. Dust from the nearby Obilić power plant made the runway extremely slippery after rain, several planes overrunning the runway. Nevertheless, the unit kept up a high level of activity, especially in night flying. On 13 December 1977, the brigade was brought back to regiment level and became once more the 83.lap. At the time, the 130.lae was concluding the transition to L-15s (MiG 21M) and NL-15s (MiG 21US), which it got from the 204.lap after it took the first deliveries of the newest L-17s (MiG 21bis); 123.lae kept flying with L-12s and NL-12s to the end of the decade. Under the command of Wing Commander Tomislav Ivanović, the regiment amassed a total of 2.027 h and 10 min on MiGs throughout 1979: 719 h 30 min with L-12s, 837 h 10 min with L-15s, 249 h 10 min with NL-12s and 221 h 30 min with NL-14s. Unfortunately, on 24 February, Flying Officer Miroslav Jelkić perished in the crash of L-15 s/n 22809.

During the summer of that year JNA photo-reporter Ivanović captured some scenes from the life of 130.lae at Slatina. Today, this material is digitized and held in the photo archive of the Media Centre 'Odbrana' of the Serbian Ministry of Defence.



MiG 21M i.e. L-15 s/n 22804 of 130.lae at Slatina aerodrome, summer 1979. During the next year, 123.lae received its first L-15s, and in 1981 the old L-12s were withdrawn from service in 83.lap.



Northrop test pilot, Darrel Cornell with Hamzić and Obradović. Cornell lost his life in a crash of the first prototype of the F-20 fighter in South Korea on 10 October 1984.



Squadron Leaders Ratko Obradović and Suad Hamzić examining the K-95B and K-56E panoramic cameras on the reconnaissance pallet no.1.

conomic crisis in 1981. The short-sightedness of such an approach did not take into account that the initial high investment would have paid off, and in the long run it would have been cheaper! The RF-5E not only had top-notch avionics and excellent tactical and technical characteristics, but compared with the MiG 21, it had much longer overhaul cycles and a longer lifetime, and in the flight hour price criteria, the F-5 family has been unmatched in the world.

Northrop failed to achieve success with the Tigereye: only two RF-5Es were bought by Malaysia and 10 by Saudi Arabia. On the other hand, between 1973 and 1987, a total of 793 F-5Es (the type was also offered to Yugoslavia at a price of 5.5 million USD per unit) and 146 F-5F (6.2 million USD) were produced in parent factory. In addition, 85 single-seaters and six two-seaters were built under license in Switzerland, 48 plus 20 in South Korea, and 242 plus 66 in Taiwan. Over 400 F-5s of the second generation are still in service all over the world.

Photographs made during the testing of the RF-5E prototype at Edwards AFB were kindly provided for publishing by retired Group Captain Suad Hamzić.



Edwards AFB, 24 September 1980: Suad Hamzić sits in the cockpit of Northrop RF-5E Tigereye s/n 71-1420 ready for a test flight. This aircraft was subsequently converted back to standard F-5E configuration and sold to Brazil.



Flight Lieutenant Zoran Radosavljević with his cousin Slobodan Vučetić and nephews Marko and Marija Mažibrada at Batajnica air show, 15 June 1997.

air-to-air missile but made a smooth landing back at Niš. From the pair which scrambled from Batajnica in the midst of the air raid, Squadron Leader Nebojša Nikolić was brought down over Kničanin village after evading two AIM-120s and ejected, while Squadron Leader Nebojša Kulačin outmanoeuvred a missile before landing at Surčin airport. The fifth L-18, which scrambled from Ponikve, was shot down from the ground by a SA-6 missile during the landing approach to Niš. Squadron Leader Predrag Milutinović ejected near Mala Reka village on Jastrebac Mountain. Each of these aircraft had either the SPO-15 radar warning receiver or the S-29 radar malfunction.

In the morning of 26 March, Squadron Leader Slobodan Perić and Flight Lieutenant Zoran Radosavljević, went together from the suburb of New Belgrade to the improvised command post of 127.lae, located between Stara Pazova and Nova Pazova. When the duty pair had to be relieved, they volunteered to fill their places at cockpit readiness, Perić flew as a leader in L-18 s/n 18114 and Radosavljević as his wingman in s/n 18113. It was 16.45 when they received orders for scramble - the fact that they got it via Radosavljević's civilian mobile phone describes better than anything else what the pilots of 127.lae had to operate with! The pair of 'Knights' took-off eight minutes later and the leader quickly established that his radar wasn't working. After reaching Zrenjanin at a treetop level, they were ordered to take a south-south-western course and, when right of Koševac village, they were notified about enemy presence over Valjevo. Holding the course, after crossing the Sava River near Šabac, the pair zoomed up through the clouds and quickly found themselves at 7.000 m. GCI notified them about enemy aircraft at one o'clock, at a distance of 60 km and going away. The leader warned GCI that they would cross into Bosnia on their current course but got no response. It wasn't long before Radosavljević informed Perić that his SPO-15 indicated that they were locked-on by a radar from the right so the leader ordered a 'scissors' manoeuvre and after some 30 to 40 seconds the pair returned to the earlier course. In no time, GCI warned them that the enemy seems to be coming back and straight at them. As they tried to make visual contact with the enemy, the leader saw four missile trails on a parallel course, 10 to 15 km to the right, and when the trails disappeared, he realized that those were air-to-air missiles. He screamed to his wingman to break away and pulled down at 6 to 7 G, as Radosavljević replied that he was escaping into clouds. Having avoided the first AIM-120, Perić's s/n 18114 was hit in the right side by the second. He ejected and landed in the area of Donja Trnova village, in Republika Srpska, the Serbian entity in Bosnia and Herzegovina. He was picked up by local Serbs and returned home within hours. His wingman was not so lucky: an AIM-120 struck his plane close to the cockpit at 17.12, at the altitude of 7.800 m and killed him instantly. The plane fell apart and Zoran Radosavljević came down near Žuge hamlet with partially deployed parachute. Locals found his body and managed to transfer it over the border; the 34 year old pilot was posthumously promoted to Squadron Leader and awarded Medal for Bravery. It later transpired that not a single NATO aircraft was in the air over Serbia when the two MiGs were scrambled and that CGI sent them directly towards a pair on combat air patrol over Bosnia! Both were shot down by Captain Jeff Hwang, piloting F-15C s/n 86-01556 from the 493rd Fighter Squadron of the 48th Fighter Wing (former 48th FBW - the very unit in which the first YAF jet pilots were trained back in 1952).