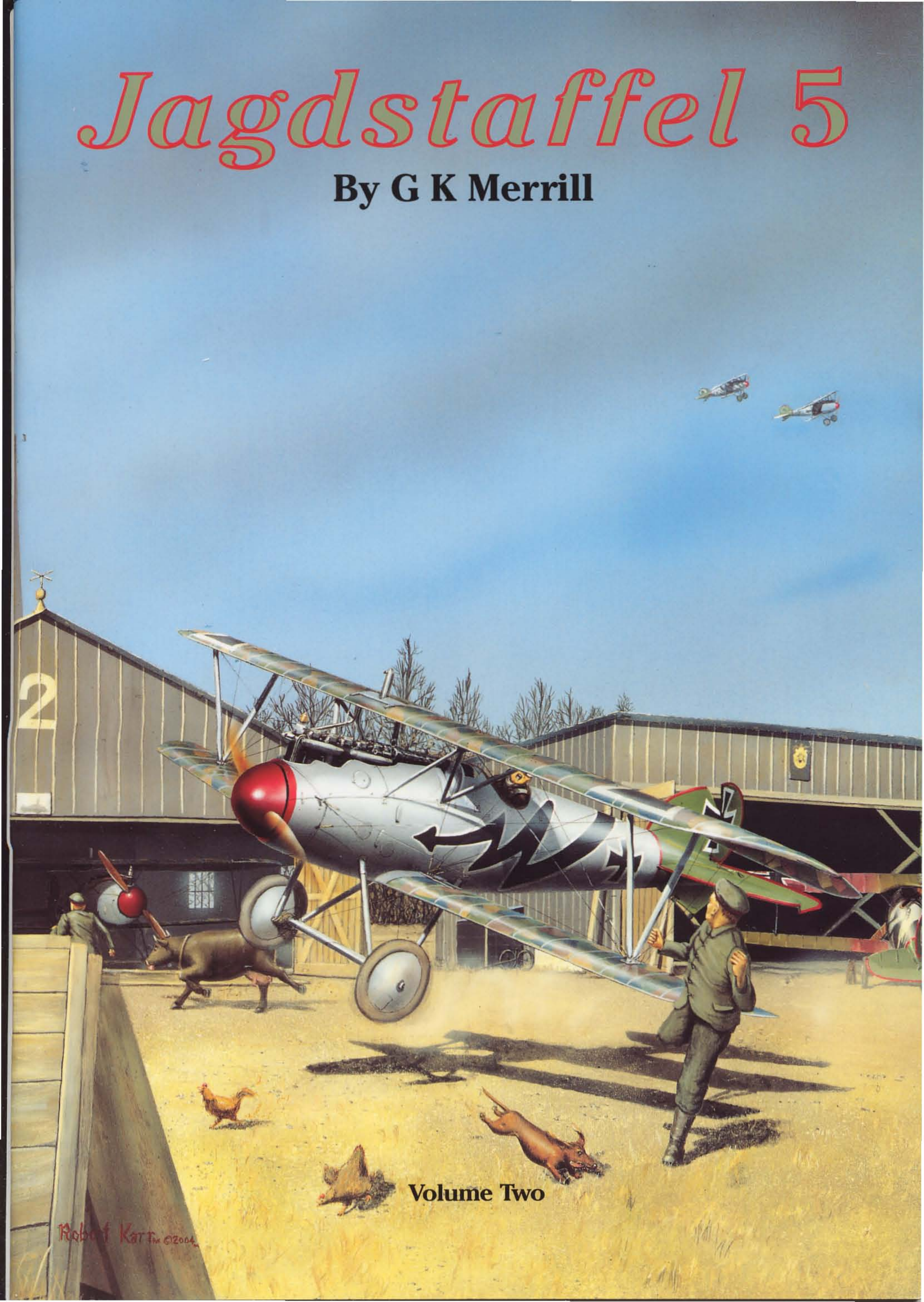


Jagdstaffel 5

By G K Merrill



Volume Two

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33). ALBATROS D.Va, 1917-1918.



33A). LOWER WING DETAIL.



34). ALBATROS D.V, May-June 1917.



34A). LOWER WING DETAIL.



35). ALBATROS D.V, May 1918.



35A). LOWER WING DETAIL.

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The story continues...



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With the loss of Kurt Schneider, the last of the dominant air leaders was gone and *Jasta 5* would not have a great deal of success until others came forward. On 27 July, *Ltn.* Wolf was credited with a Bristol F2b over Esquerchin at 0900 hrs. His victims were 2/Lt. J. Chapman and Lt. W B MacKay of No.11 Squadron in A7134, both unwounded and made PoW. The problem is the conflict in times, this crew is listed as going down at 1950 hrs. in one source and as a 'Sopwith', quite possibly what Wolf actually claimed, as at 2103 hrs. The 0900 hrs. appears to be an error and should read 19XX or 21XX hrs. with some slight difference depending upon accounts. On the last day of the month *Ltn.* Rudolf Nebel was posted away to *Kest 1b*. Although not having proved himself a particularly efficient combat pilot, his talents were recognised and he commanded *Kest 1b* until May 1918 when he took command of *Kest 1a* and remained there until the end of the war.

Also posted away (arriving at his new unit *Kest 4b* sometime in August 1917) was Heinrich Büssing. This move sounds extremely similar to the one involving Nebel and may have occurred at the same time. Unlike Nebel, Büssing would not survive the war, being killed in a test flight in May 1918. By that time he was highly decorated and had four unconfirmed and two confirmed victories. In two different publications Franks, *et al.*, give different identities to his second victim, it may have been the famous *Lt.* Albert Mézergues, CO of *Sop.129*, PoW. In any case, this victory was scored on 22 August 1917 while Büssing was at *Kesta 4b*. It confirms that by that date he had left *Jasta 5*, his departure being that of the last 'charter member' of the unit.

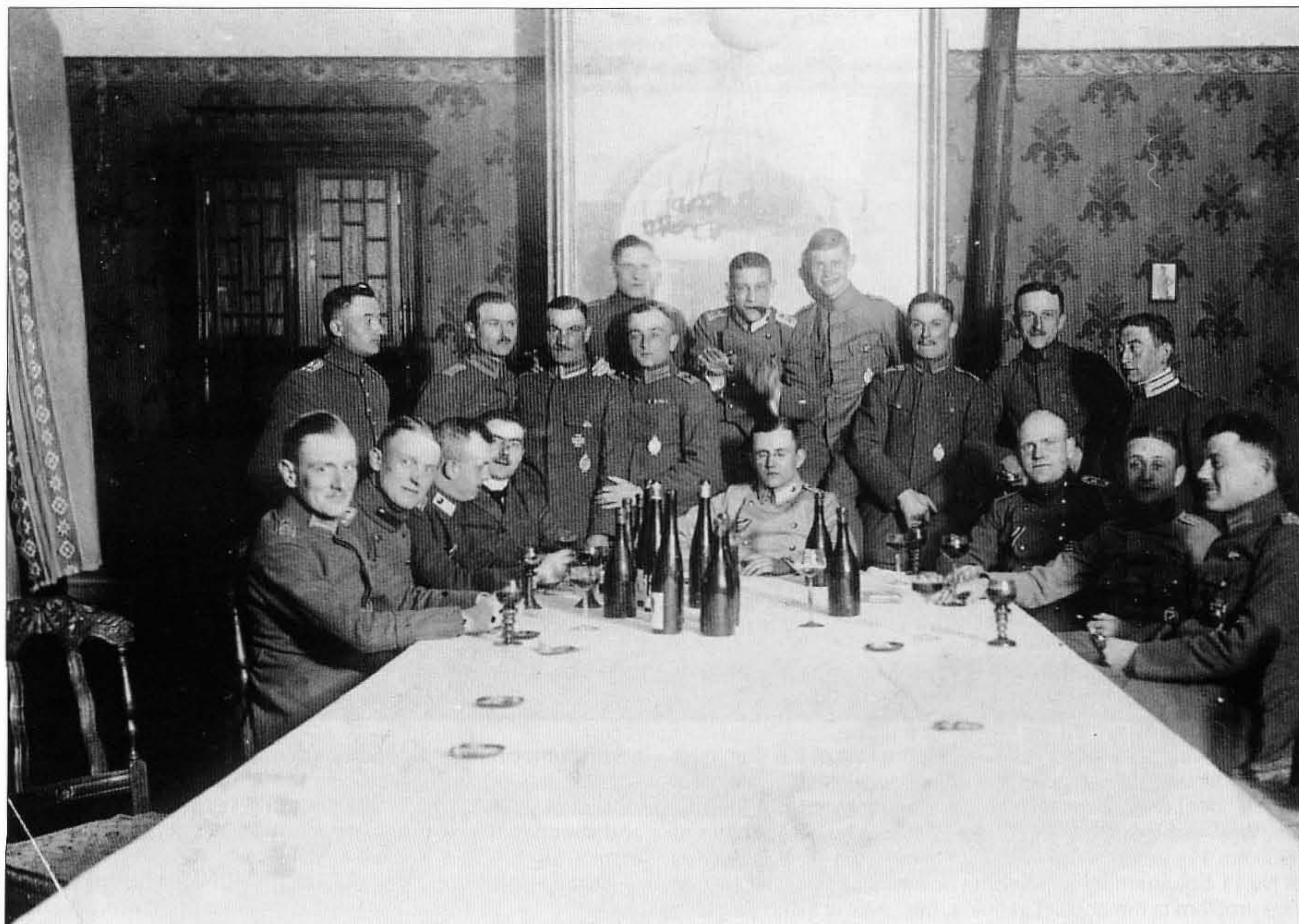
August also began slowly with no victories until the 10th of the month. The 'balloon fever' was now in full swing and Rumey flamed one at 0900 hrs., but details are lacking and he did not receive credit. Somewhat surprisingly it was not confirmed. Perhaps it was confirmed as a victory for Emil Thuy of *Jasta 21* or Theodor Rumpel of *Jasta 16b* who also claimed balloons this day. Könnecke claimed a victory over an aircraft that evening, however, DH5 B357 of No.24 Squadron, its pilot Capt. H E Head being killed. The action occurred at 1940 hrs. at Malincourt.

On 15 August Paul Bäumer was posted back to *Jasta Boelcke* and his loss was undoubtedly felt deeply. It is tempting to speculate about how things would have been different had he remained with *Jasta 5*. Just as an example, depending upon whose figures one accepts, subtracting the 40 victories he scored with *Jasta Boelcke* and adding them to the total for *Jasta 5* could have had the two units tied for second place in the scoring among *Jagdstaffeln*. It is also tempting to imagine a 'Golden Quartet' of NCO pilots

and Bäumer hunting in the company of Könnecke, Mai, and Rumey as each competed with the others in amassing their individual scores. Alas, it was not to be, he returned to *Jasta B* and stardom, but he frequently returned to visit his old unit and comrades.

Jasta 5 had one of its best scoring days of the summer on 18 August, with *Ltn.* Matthaei destroying a Bristol F2b over Fresnes-lès-Montauban at 0723 hrs. His victims may have been 2/Lts. T W Abbott and M Nicholson in A7126 from No.11 Squadron, both killed. The timing was about right, although the locations do not agree. In any case, the victory was confirmed as his 4th or 5th. Perhaps this is when wing stripes were added. *Ltn.* Schuhmann also claimed and was credited with a Bristol F2b in the same action South of Brébières. This may have been A7147, also from No.11 Squadron, and crewed by 2/Lt. G A Rose and Cpl. H G Bassinger, both PoW. This victory has also be credited to Viktor Schobinger of *Jasta 12* and was also claimed by Josef Mai. It was a case of both officers receiving credit and the enlisted man did not, whether this reflects rank bias or not. Schuhmann listed the claim as at 0755 hrs. over 'St. Brébières'. About three hours later two of *Jasta 5*'s enlisted pilots would make claims in another action. *Vizefeldwebel* Dilcher claimed a Sopwith Pup at 1035 hrs. over Villers Plouich and *Vzfw.* Könnecke a Pup over Ribécourt-la-Tour at 1050 hrs. This latter was actually DH5 A9438 from No.32 Squadron piloted by 2/Lt. T R Kirkness who was killed at St. Julien at 1020 hrs. (German time). Dilcher's claim was confirmed and may have been real, although it cannot be matched with any British loss, Sopwith Pup (one lost this day from No.54 Squadron), Sopwith Camel (one lost this day from No.45 Squadron and another from 4 Naval) or another single seater that might have been confused with a Pup as Könnecke's DH5 was. On this day *Uffz.* Hans Becker was transferred into *Jasta 5* from *Jastaschule I*. On the following day Fritz Rumey shot down an RE8 at 0820 hrs. over Epéhy. His victim was A4266 from No.59 Squadron and both Lt. F B Tipping and 2/Lt. G S Gordon were killed.

62. During the day of 25 February 1918, a well-satisfied appearing Engineer Kaendler (one reference gives the name as Kändler) of Siemens Werke has just supervised the installation (or at least the delivery) of the motor machine guns in the Albatros fighters of Josef Mai on the left, and Fritz Rumey on the right. Kaendler is in the middle with Mai to his right. A rather bored-looking Fritz Rumey is leaning on his aircraft's port lower wing. In a later, probably early evening, photo with these pilots Kaendler looks distinctly ill at ease, but...



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The next day, 20 August, was another eventful one for *Jasta* 5. In a big morning battle *Ltn.* Reinhold Schuhmann was shot down and killed at 0900 hrs. near Escarpelle-Douai. At the same time Josef Mai got his first confirmed victory over Sopwith Camel B3876 from No.70 Squadron, its pilot 2/Lt. H D Turner being killed. This victory is listed as being at Rumaucourt and the victim burned making confirmation within German lines easy. Dilcher claimed an 'enemy aircraft' in the same scrap over Marquion at 0910 hrs., but was not confirmed. Matthaei claimed two Bristol F2bs, both at 0915 hrs. over 'Sauhy' (perhaps Sauchy-Cauchy?) and Tortequenne. The first was not confirmed, but the second one was. It was not an F2b, but might have been one of two DH4s lost by No.55 Squadron in this general area this day, perhaps A7522 at Brébières. The pilot, 2/Lt. C P Adamson was wounded and made PoW, the observer, 2AM F J Smith died of his wounds. This large battle covered more than 30 km, progressing from Northwest to Southeast.

As a harbinger of things to come, both Könnecke and Rumey made claims the following day, 21 August. Both were at 1405 hrs. both supposedly RE8s and both over Le Pavé (shown as La Pavé by Franks, *et al.*). Könnecke's was confirmed, Rumey's was not. The loss was RE8 A3535, from No.59 Squadron, Capt. F D Pemberton killed and Lt. J A Manners-Smith wounded and made PoW. Mai would achieve his second victory on 25 August, which he claimed as a 'Sopwith', but was actually DH5 A9212 of No.41 Squadron flown by Capt. J S de Lis le Bush who came down at Malincourt and died of his wounds. That day Fritz Rumey was wounded in air combat. How soon he returned to flying is unknown, but he was wounded again less than a month later on 24 September, the day that *Ltn.* Wilhelm Lehmann and *Ltn.* Alhard Schöck joined *Jasta* 5. It is known that Lehmann took over Bäumer's old *Edelweiss* machine and it appears to have been he who wrecked it by overturning it in a canal lock. Thereafter Lehmann had a second Albatros D.V marked in a similar, but not quite identical, fashion to this machine. The second aircraft had the red extend forward to mid-cockpit and the *Edelweiss* was distinctly more complex and

the wheel discs look green. The forward fuselage may have been overpainted grey unlike Bäumer's machine. Although no photographs show it, it seems pretty certain that 'L's would have been painted under the wings. On the last day of the month Josef Mai received confirmation for his first victory and his *Ehrenbecher*. Sometime during the month of August *Ltn.* Heinrich Büssing was posted away to command *Kest* 4b where he would serve with distinction until being killed in an accident on 10 May 1918. His departure marked the passing of the last of the original members of the *Jasta*.

On 4 September 1917, Mai claimed a 'Martinsyde' and the victory was contested by both Matthaei and *Vzfw.* Cremer. It was awarded to Matthaei as his sixth victory and listed as a 'Martinsyde' at 0915 hrs. over Le Catelet. It was actually F2b A7156 from No.11 Squadron crewed by 2/Lt. J F Wightman and 2AM J Heedy, both killed. The entry in Mai's log is significant because it places Cremer in *Jasta* 5 in September instead of the vague references that he might have joined the unit during October. Just how early he joined will remain a mystery, but Jupp Cremer stayed with the unit for quite a long time. Whether it was his first machine or not, it is probably at about this time that *Jasta* 5 received some (some more?) OAW-built Albatros D.IIIs and Cremer flew one, marked with unit tail and spinner, a grey fuselage and a white 'X' with black edges on the fuselage sides. When photographed there do not appear to have been 'C's under the wings.

Two days later there were a pair of claims over French opponents. Lehmann claimed a Sopwith 1½ Strutter north of St. Quentin at 1405 hrs and *Ltn.* Schöck another two minutes later over Montbrehain. These aircraft were from *Escadrilles* Sop.107 and 108 according to one source although which victim went with which victor is unclear. According to Franks, *et al.*, Lehmann's victim was from Sop.128 crewed by *MdL.* Barbe and *Soldat* Bartaire. The 1405 victim burned inside Allied lines and the 1407 one inside German lines. On this day, when *Jasta* 5 achieved their 115th and 116th victories, they received congratulations for having scored their 100th. Also according to Franks, *et al.*, Dilcher scored a victory over a DH5 above Villiers Plouich at 1035 hrs.



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63. ...in a later (?) evening photo with the entire *Jasta* and many wine bottles, most of them probably now empty, we have, left to right in front of the mirror: ?, Oppenhorst, von Hippel, standing left to right: ?, Mai, Rumey, Vogt, Cremer, Buder, Könnecke, sitting left to right: Lehmann, Matthaei (visiting?), Zettlemeyer, a more relaxed-looking Kaendler, Flashar (asleep?), Schaumberg, ?, Rath.

64. *Jasta* 5's squadron 'hack', LVG C.V 9474/17 with the original white band and '6' showing through the green paint. Also showing through the green are LVG logos on the struts. It also had an Eta propeller. In the background is the *Komet*-marked Albatros D.Va (OAW), thought to have been flown by Martin Klein.

65. *Jasta* 5's other 'hack', F2b A7231 in its final guise, probably in January 1918.

66. Another, albeit familiar, aspect of *Jasta* 5's captured Bristol Fighter painted with the graphic wing inscriptions: 'Good People Don't Shoot!'



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on 18 September. It is not shown in either squadron history I have seen and Henshaw's citation suggests that one of two *Jasta* 12 pilots was probably the victor.

An unusual event occurred on 19 September, *Oblt.* Flashar scored his second (and last) aerial victory of the war. His claim was for a Morane-Saulnier BB A234 from No.3 Squadron, crewed by Lt. E. Golding and Cpl. L. S. Goss, the former killed outright, the latter dying of wounds. This victory was listed at 1203 hrs. at Elincourt. Matthaei also had a confirmed victory over another No.3 Squadron Morane at 1217 hrs. west of Serain. This machine was P A6655 crewed by 2/Lts. C. A. Sutcliffe and T. Humble, both PoW. Some sources reverse the victors and victims, but both *Jasta* 5 pilots received confirmations regardless of who shot down who. Amazingly, it is reported that No.3 Squadron was on a 'training flight' in these obsolete aircraft almost directly over *Jasta* 5's aerodrome. In this same action, however, *Ltn.* Alhard Schöck was killed in air combat. Replacements continued to flow into *Jasta* 5, however, for on this same day *Ltn.* Hans Schlömer and *Ltn.* Waldemar Christiansen were assigned to the *Jasta*. Rudolf Matthaei closed out the unit's scoring for September with a victory over a Sopwith Pup at 1845 hrs. on 25 September over Boursies. Although he received credit, there was no corresponding British loss.

October was another slow month. *Ltn.* Fritz Oppenhorst was assigned on the last day. It is thought that his first aircraft was an Albatros D.V. with yellow hearts edged in red on the plywood fuselage, unit tail, spinner, 10 cm nose band, and Garuda propeller. He flew another D.V. in 1918 with a red heart on a white band. Earlier in the month Könnecke claimed a Sopwith 1½ Strutter at 1845 hrs. on 17 October over Origny-Ste.-Benoît. It was French and according to Bailey and Cony was from *Sop.* 128 with *Mdl.* Jean le Dortz and *S/Lt.* Yves both going MIA. Also that evening *Offst.* Karl Bey forced down a Bristol F2b from No.11 Squadron Southwest of Cambrai. This aircraft A7231 was crewed by 2/Lts. E. Scholtz and H. C. Wookey, both PoW as the machine was captured intact. This is the first record of Bey being with *Jasta* 5 and we have no idea when he arrived. There were photos taken of Bey and his prisoners in front of his D.V. with its beautiful Garuda propeller. Unfortunately, they are from directly in front and no fuselage marking is visible, if present. Presented with a 'gift' two-seater like this was too great an opportunity to be passed up, and it was quickly pressed into service...

A tale of two 'hacks'

Fighter units in WWI were at a disadvantage over their multi-place brethren in regard to what they could haul about in their aircraft. There was little more than enough room for the pilot in the cramped confines of the average single-seater cockpit. In contrast, the 'back seat' in the average two-seater had ample room not only for a passenger, but also for cargo. With enough, and heavy enough, cargo the passenger might be eliminated entirely. Thus could single-seat units like *Jagdstaffeln* use two-seaters to ferry people and supplies behind the lines and it is not hard to imagine such hard-working aircraft performing their very necessary duties of supplying *pâté*, cigarettes, and cognac to the pilots at the front. There were two logical sources for such 'hacks', they could be enemy aircraft captured intact, such as Bristol F2b A7231 that formed a windfall for *Jasta* 5. Occasionally a lucky shot would sever a fuel line or similar, forcing the aircraft down, but repairable with local resources. A small advantage to having such a 'hack' is that it would familiarise pilots who flew it with the performance of opposing machines. On the down side, however, the breakage of any major part probably spelled the end of its use because resupply of spares would be a matter of luck. From the standpoint of a German *Jagdstaffel*, therefore, a superior source for such machines would be German two-seaters. They could be more easily repaired, but obtaining them in the first place was difficult - the High Command doubtless harboured the quaint idea that these aircraft were better employed on other duties such as in front-line two-seat units - and keeping them from the prying eyes and out of the grasp of higher authority must have been difficult as well. Yet, whatever the source(s), German fighter units frequently had a two-seater

or two on strength. *Jasta* 5 was no exception, and A7231 was the first of them.

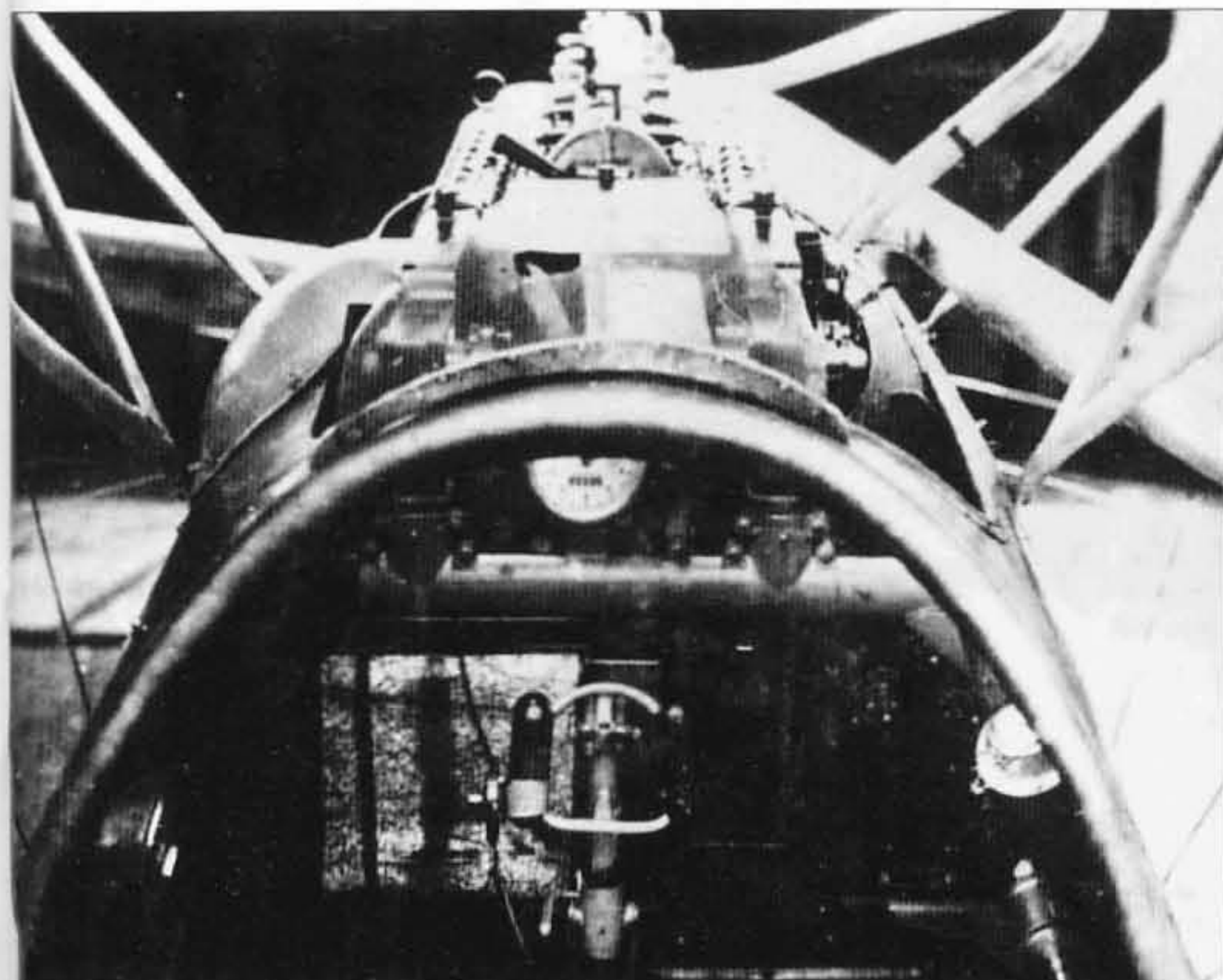
Almost immediately after capture, *Jasta* 5 began to modify the Bristol. The first step was to overpaint the roundels and this was done with white fields bearing standard *Eiserne Kreuze* on wings, fuselage, and rudder. There are photos that show it in just this state with the sloping bars of No.11 Squadron still in evidence as well as the white serial on the fin. Obviously this was insufficient to prevent it being a target for German aircraft and *Flak* because it still looked like an F2b and those crosses might not be prominent enough to protect them. Moreover, the fin serial and bars clearly looked British and eliminating them was important so the next step was to overpaint the tail and rear fuselage as far forward as the cross field, the colour almost certainly being *Jasta* green. Further, a bold legend was added to the top of the lower wing '*Gute Leute*' (Good people) and on the top of the upper wing '*Nicht Schiessen!*' (Don't shoot!). It seems probable that the wing surfaces were also painted green before that treatment and the colours of the legends are speculative, but black with red highlights seems a reasonable choice. During the final painting effort the white fields surrounding the fuselage and tail crosses were reduced to the proper 50 mm edging. In this final configuration the machine was operated by *Jasta* 5 for several months, at least as long as 5 February 1918 when Hans von Hippel flew it for evaluation. Its fate is unknown, but quite likely something broke that could not be replaced.

The other 'hack' was LVG C.V. 9474/17. Its origin is unknown, but it had previously carried a white fuselage band and the number '6'. *Jasta* 5 personnel pulled out all the stops in decorating this machine, overpainting the entire fuselage, struts, and tail unit with the green that characterised the *Jasta*. The tail had the classic red edge and the spinner was red. The former white markings showed through the green paint. It carried an *Eta* propeller. We do not know the dates it was with *Jasta* 5, but according to von Hippel's flight log it had to have been there from at least 23 March until 11 April 1918, dates on which he flew it. Indeed, it had to have been with the unit even earlier because it was photographed at Boistrancourt prior to their move away from there on 19 March, and if identification of pilot and machine is correct in the photo, prior to 18 February. It is not evident in photographs taken during March visits by von Hoepfner and von Richthofen, suggesting that it might have been hidden somewhere. Another photograph of this machine appears in *WINDSOCK DATAFILE* No.71 (photograph 37) with Hans Schlömer in the cockpit and Fritz Oppenhorst as passenger. Probably on this same day, they used the aircraft to give 'joy rides' to some visiting nurses, thereby defining another indispensable use for squadron 'hacks', gaining favour with members of the fair sex! In addition to these two, a photograph suggests that FE2b 857 'B1' was kept by the unit from its capture on 5 June until at least late July 1917.

In spite of what would normally be a slow month as winter approached, November 1917 was a more active time for *Jasta* 5 than October had been. Matthaei claimed an 'enemy aircraft' on 12 November that was not confirmed. Still bigger things lay ahead.

The tempo increases - Tankschlacht von Cambrai

War on the Western Front had seen a series of major campaigns interspersed with more localised, but not necessarily less bloody, battles. In early 1916 the Germans launched a major offensive at Verdun intended, not to break through and achieve a decisive victory, but to wear down the French forces - the 'Bleed France dry' philosophy - that would force the French to sue for peace on terms favourable to Germany. The heroism and tenacity of the French forces at Verdun negated the plan. Nevertheless, the French army was *in* (considerable) *extremis* and without major help from their British allies the issue might have remained in doubt. The British launched their disastrous campaign on the Somme in mid-1916 largely to relieve pressure on Verdun. The strategy worked, but at a terrific cost. The 1917 campaigns saw the Germans on the defensive throughout. The refreshed French launched the equally disastrous Nivelle offensive in the Chemin



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67. Pilot's view from the cockpit of Albatros D.V 5284/17 - inside the map and its holder dominate the cramped confines. The forward cross-member supports the butts of the twin LMG 0.8 Spandau machine guns.

des Dames. Its failure helped launch another British attack, Third Ypres, or Passchendaele, that achieved little at a proportionally prohibitive cost.

The stalemate of trench warfare had frustrated both sides on the Western Front since 1914 and the possibility of breaking this deadlock had led to the development of several new innovative weapons. Some of these could have made a huge difference if they had been properly employed and supported. The German introduction of poison gas, and to a lesser extent the flame-thrower, had such potential advantage, but not exploited to its potential and its effect was quickly neutralized. The war's biggest failure to exploit technological success, however, was undoubtedly the British inability to achieve a decisive result from their successful tank battle at Cambrai, November/December 1917.

The tank was a tremendous innovation. Designed initially by DaVinci four centuries earlier, armoured warfare only became feasible with the introduction of the internal combustion engine and modern thin, resistant steel armour. For practical purposes the British invented the tank in 1916-17 as an answer to war in the trenches and in large part as an antidote to the machine gun, in whose use the Germans had become especially proficient. After three years of unprecedented bloodshed, the British High Command was forced to admit that frontal attacks by massed infantry, even with extensive artillery preparation and support, were doomed to failure against well dug-in and fortified machine guns. No amount of enterprise and *élan* would overcome the fact that rifle-calibre bullets, fired at a high cyclic rate of fire by well-trained gunners, would wound, maim, and kill soldiers exposed to such fire. Trenches offered protection, but without mobility; they are essentially defensive in nature. Required was mobile protection and this led to the tank, a fully-tracked fighting vehicle with movable weapons to cover much of the battlefield.

British tank development was an extremely high priority and utmost secrecy was required - hence the designation of the crated tanks as 'water carriers for Mesopotamia', or 'tanks'. Remarkably, secret as this development was, the British managed to deploy a few in limited actions before the planned action at Cambrai which served to warn the Germans of the new weapons. Fortunately for the British, the Germans failed to comprehend the full significance and potential of the tanks. Sadly, the same can be said of the British high command.

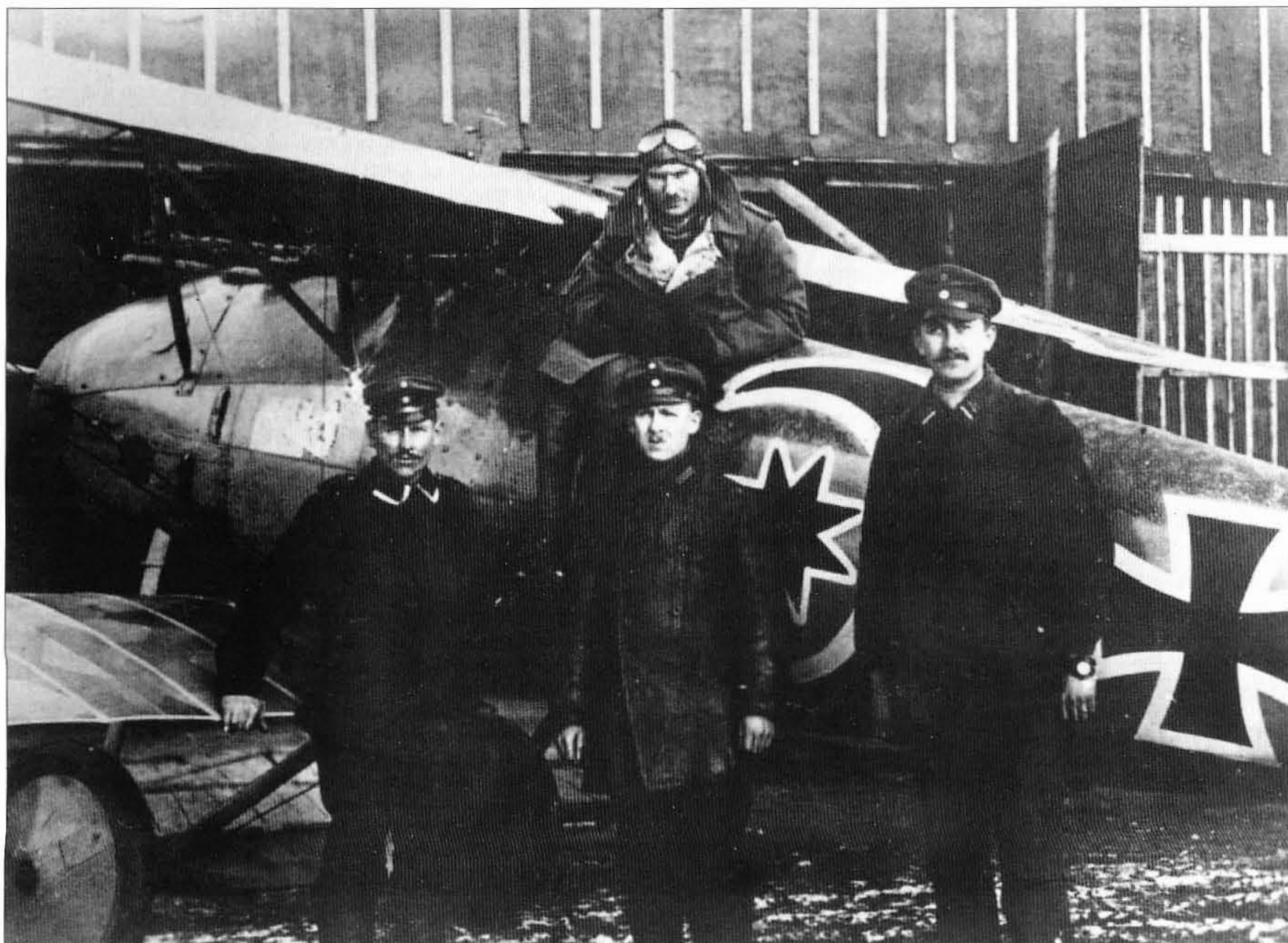
There were at least three good reasons for choosing Cambrai for the world's first major tank battle. It had the reputation as being a quiet sector of the front and surprise might be achieved. Thinly-held by the Germans, much of their army from this region

was still north in Flanders awaiting more British attacks. Indeed, this was true of air units as much as ground units and *Jasta 5* was the only fighter squadron in the 2nd Army sector. Finally, this area was less fought over than many others and the ground less cratered as a result, promising better trafficability for tanks. The battle at Cambrai does not rank as one of the largest, longest, or bloodiest actions of a war that excelled in all three categories. The lesson it taught was one of lost opportunities. After achieving spectacular early success, the British failed to exploit it, and the Germans were quickly able to counterattack and regain about the amount of ground they had lost. The British had neither the reserves nor the resources available to press the attack that could have ended the war there and then, thus saving hundreds of thousands of lives. It has been said that the British did not have the necessary resources anywhere and that is largely true because they had squandered them at Passchendaele. Far more telling, however, was the failure in planning to be able to exploit the success.

The course of the action and its consequences are well known. British tanks, 474 of them, were concentrated along the southern 6 km of a 12 km attacking front, forming the right wing of the British Third Army under Byng. With little or no artillery preparation they attacked through the mist, fog, and rain at 0620 hrs. on the morning of 20 November 1917, attacking in a Northeasterly direction toward Cambrai. At most places the tanks breached the front-line trenches of the Siegfried Line with ease. The only notable exceptions were where trenches were too wide for the British tanks to span, even with fascines. The German infantry found that their rifles, and more importantly their machine guns, were useless against the armour. The troops in the back-up trench fared no better and it was breached as were the first and second reserve trenches in many places. Little now separated the British Army from the German heartland as they had advanced as much as seven kilometres through German defensive lines prepared in depth, a greater advance in a few hours than Passchendaele had achieved in four months and at a tiny fraction of the casualties.

Late in the day German artillery was rolled out of its prepared positions and, at frequently point-blank range, the guns were able to knock out enough tanks to stop the advance. The British infantry had not been able to keep up with the tanks, slow as they were. A strong infantry presence would have been able to neutralise the German guns and maintain the momentum, but infantry-tank team tactics were not perfected until the next war. On another combined arms front, however, the British were prescient. They had recognised the potential for aerial support of tank operations. The tanks were primitive, the aircraft of the day not much less so, but aircraft in a ground attack role had proved of immense value and some squadrons were shifting increasingly toward this most hazardous of activities. After the German offensive of March 1918 it would be almost the sole duty of many units. On 20 November the Royal Flying Corps launched several squadrons with the express purpose of attacking and disabling German airfields and units. In fighter aircraft they had the advantage of 134 against the 12 that *Jasta 5* had for the entire sector. No.3 Squadron with their Sopwith Camels were targeted for 'Estourmel', in reality *Jasta 5* at Boistrancourt. November had already been a tough month for No.3 Squadron, on the 6th it lost four Camels and their pilots made PoW. The squadron would lose most of the rest of its strength on 20 November. They sent nine Camels against 'Estourmel', Carnières, and Caudry. They lost eight of them, one in air combat, some from anti-aircraft, but most to the weather: three dead and two made PoW, the other three pilots surviving and returning, although their aircraft did not.

Reporting from the German perspective, *Oblt.* Flashar was awakened about 2300 hrs. on 19 November, a panicked High Command telling him to alert his *Staffel* because there would be a big British attack in their sector early next morning. Flashar took the information with scepticism because there had been no indication of an impending attack and, although he took the necessary actions, he went back to sleep. In the morning Flashar and his men were awakened by British guns that had been silent until the moment of attack. Aircraft were readied for take-off, but



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they discovered it was virtually impossible for flight with a mixture of fog, mist, and rain. Visibility was no more than a few metres. The phone rang incessantly as his superiors enquired, requested, ordered and finally demanded under penalty of court martial, that Flashar get his unit into the air. Flashar's protestations that conditions were completely unsuitable and that he had only 12 aircraft with pilots (we do not know which was in shorter supply, aircraft or pilots, but this is fewer than the previous summer), that they would not be able to find their targets, and that they would lose most, if not all, their precious aircraft by attempting to land under these conditions, went unheeded. His superiors countered with the observation that the British were flying so that he should be too, ignoring the fact that the British could afford the losses and the Germans could not. Soon after 0800 hrs. nearby anti-aircraft fire alerted Flashar and his men that there were British aircraft close to their aerodrome. Indeed, as they watched from the flightline a series of dark shapes passed overhead in the mist, the pilots likely not seeing that they were over their target. Flashar had no choice but to order at least a part of his *Staffel* into the air. He instructed two of his pilots to circle left and two to circle right, the idea being to try to avoid contact between them that might result either in collision or destruction by mistaken identity; the mist being so thick that it was impossible to distinguish friend from foe. Once airborne Flashar briefly glimpsed two black dots that were enemy fighters, but they quickly disappeared in the mist and he was greatly relieved that, in completing his circle in about five minutes' time he was at low altitude over the aerodrome and could safely land. Amazingly, Josef Mai had blundered upon an adversary in the mist and fired a burst as he shot past his opponent. Thus Mai got a lucky victory at 0840 hrs. over a Sopwith Camel, his victim was 2/Lt. G W Hall from No.3 Squadron in B5159, killed 1 km East of Estourmel. Nearby, two other British pilots had crashed into trees and been killed; two others made forced landings to become prisoners. *Jasta 5* was lucky that they lost neither pilots nor aircraft. They weren't quite so lucky that afternoon. With apparently

68. Josef Mai with his mechanics, left to right: Klöckner, Zahn, and Schumacher and his long-serving Albatros D.Va 5284/17. Mai flew this machine from late November 1917 until early May 1918, scoring seven victories in it. By 17 April 1918 the marking had been converted to a man-in-the-moon when at Cappy.

clearing conditions the entire *Staffel* took off at 1400 hrs. only to have the visibility worsen to a bare three metres. Only half of *Jasta 5*'s pilots were able to return safely to Boistrancourt, the others set down somewhere without totally wrecking their aircraft, but minor repairs would be necessary for some of them and there would be delays in returning to base. In a later flight that day *Vzfw.* Bey was detailed to attack British armour with phosphorous and armour-piercing ammunition. Flying conditions remained bad and Flashar reported several 'near misses' in regards to mid-air collisions, in all cases he had no idea the nationality of the aircraft he barely avoided. He, and his men, were grateful to be back on the ground without loss, but by day's end the British tanks were a mere eight kilometres from Boistrancourt.

The weather on 21 November was no better, but the pilots of *Jasta 5* were gradually improving at flying under poor conditions and as a result were able to perform useful work strafing British troops. On 22 November, the weather cleared and aircraft on both sides were out in force. *Jasta 5* had 30 aerial combats on this day, with four confirmed victories. Mai received credit for a Bristol F2b at 0840 hrs. at Cantaing-sur-l'Escault. There is no corresponding British loss. His flight log lists the victory as having occurred on 21 November, but there is no corresponding loss then either. At the same time Könnecke received credit for a DH5 over Anneux. This was probably 2/Lt. D G Clark from No.68 (Australian) Squadron who was killed in action at this time over Bourlon Wood. Just a few minutes later Rumey claimed a Camel at 0910 hrs. at Marcoing. This may have been a Sopwith Pup B1747 of No.46 Squadron flown by Lt. T L Atkinson (PoW). Matthaei claimed a Sopwith Camel at 1130 hrs. SE of Fontaine-Notre-

Dame. There is at least an outside chance that his victim was none other than Capt. Arthur Gould Lee, of *No Parachute* fame, forced to land near this time and place, but who escaped back to his lines. His captured aircraft was B2457 from No.46 Squadron. That evening *Jasta 5* received reinforcements from *Jasta 15* (eight aircraft) and no less a personage than *Rittmeister* Manfred Freiherr von Richthofen flew to Boistrancourt to take command of the combined operation. British infantry had carried forward the momentum launched by the tanks and were barely five kilometres away. The next day heavy artillery would begin to shell the aerodrome and Flashar made plans to withdraw.

Action continued to intensify and 23 November saw bitter air combat. Soon after noon *Jasta 5* engaged Sopwith Camels over Bourlon Wood. Three of these got on Flashar's tail and he was only saved by the intervention of Rumey and Könnecke, each of whom is supposed to have shot one down in flames. In point of fact only Rumey received credit for a victory whose confirmation was delayed, possibly because of uncertainty about the accuracy of the claim. Actually, No.3 Squadron lost two Camels here and, in spite of a time difference both claims are probably valid, Könnecke's being listed as 1320 hrs., Rumey's as 1200 hrs. Camels B2369 and B5153 were flown respectively by Lts. J W McCash and F H Stephens, both killed. Alternatively, the victims could have come from No.46 Squadron who had six Camels shot up, one destroyed. Rumey later claimed an F2b at 1300 hrs. SW of Marcoing, but was probably Armstrong-Whitworth FK8 B316, from No.8 Squadron; its crew 2/Lts. W A Booth and G J Howells both being killed. There is also a chance that this was DH4 A2170 from No.25 Squadron crewed by 2/Lt. R Main and 1AM G P Leach, both made PoW. Most importantly for Rumey, when his victory of earlier in the day was finally confirmed this one would make number five and make him an 'ace'. Sadly, *Jasta 5* also lost a promising young pilot when Vzfw. Karl Bey was shot

down near Anneux and killed.

The brief interlude of good weather ended after the 23rd and would not improve until 29 November, when air operations recommenced. On this day Vzfw. Cremer claimed a Bristol F2b around noon at Cauroir. Although the victory is also attributed to another German pilot this may well have been A7253 crewed by 2/Lts. E V Clark and G Noon of No.20 Squadron, both killed. In this same action Mai's Albatros was shot up and he had to land with a dead engine. Also in the same action Ltn. Christiansen claimed another F2b, but this was not confirmed. On the last day of the month Josef Mai got his fifth victory to become an 'ace'. His victim was Capt. R T R Townsend of No.56 Squadron in SE5a B40, shot down in flames and killed at Le Pavé at 1548 hrs. On this day the Germans launched their massive counter-attack that over several days would regain just about all the territory lost in the original tank attack. The aerodrome at Boistrancourt was safe again, and *Jasta 5* could continue the work they had already done there for so long. On the British side the catastrophic month was finally over for No.3 Squadron with a total of about 14 losses.

December 1917 was busier than the cold weather might have permitted in other years. On 5 December, both Ltn. Oppenhorst and Vzfw. Könnecke scored victories, their 1st and 10th, respectively. Oppenhorst's 'victim' may have been F2b A7266 of No.11 Squadron crewed by 2/Lt. H R Child and Lt. A Reeve who were forced down near Abancourt, but survived. There was another F2b from No.11 Squadron that was lost in the same action, but that is generally credited to Vzfw. Barth of *Jasta 10*. Könnecke's victim was more definite, he forced down Sopwith Camel B6234 'A' of No.3 Squadron flown by 2/Lt. L G Nixon at Séranvilliers-Forenville. Nixon was made PoW and his undamaged aircraft was extensively photographed.

On 10 December Hans Schlömer claimed an RE8 west of Cambrai (Hendecourt-lès-Cagnicourt) for his first victory, probably C5032 from No.15 Squadron, the crew Lt. L H Thierry and 2AM. R T Lee being killed. On the same day, and probably in the same action, Vzfw. Artur Weber claimed an RE8 that was not confirmed.

69. Wilhelm Gürke and his elaborately-marked Albatros D.Va at Boistrancourt, February or March 1918. Its Propulsor propeller shows nicely.

▼ 69





▲ 70

(Interestingly, another series of sources list Weber's arrival at *Jasta 5* as 17 December). On 19 December, Weber would make another claim and this one was confirmed, an SE5a at 1430 hrs. at Havrincourt (or Bois d'Havrincourt). This may have been B506 flown by Capt. R A Mayberry, MC, one of the top aces of No.56 Squadron. It was not unknown for an ace, even one with 21 victories like Mayberry, to fall to a novice. On the other hand, Mayberry's loss is generally credited to *Flakbatterie Nr.108*, and that may very well have been the case although *Jasta 5* personnel photographed the remains of aircraft and pilot as a 'kill' of theirs. The following day, 20 December 1917, *Ltn.* Hans Joachim von Hippel was assigned to *Jasta 5*.

Lightning strikes (at least) four times - the aircraft of von Hippel

The assignment of another new pilot to *Jasta 5* would ordinarily not justify a new section unless he was a high-scoring ace. Hans von Hippel would achieve only a single confirmed victory, but he was important nonetheless, mostly for his first-hand knowledge and ability to chronicle events that took place in the unit while there with some knowledge of who preceded and followed him. Von Hippel was also popular because his sister Erna, a nurse, frequently came to visit her brother at Boistrancourt. To be charitable, neither of the von Hippel siblings was what one could call handsome. In fairness, however, we suspect that Erna was bright and engaging with an excellent sense of humour like her brother. The popularity stemmed from the fact that when Erna came to visit, she frequently brought several of her nursing sisters with her. There are numerous photos of garden parties and *soirées* of various kinds attended by the pilots and several nurses, including Erna.

Hans von Hippel chose a black and white *Blitz* for his personal marking and it appears to have remained his primary marking throughout his time at *Jasta 5*. We can document at least four aircraft that bore variations of this marking. Deciding which was which is not so easy. Von Hippel made an extract from his flight

log for Bill Puglisi that emphasised the serial numbers of all the aircraft he flew during the war. It does not show every flight, and unfortunately, omits the crashes. The following is the sequential list of serials, all ending in the omitted /17, for the *Albatrosse* von Hippel flew with *Jasta 5*. The (n) indicates a new machine and the (a) that he listed it as a D.Va rather than a D.V, whether he was correct or not: 2068, 5639, 7037(n), 4629, 5677(n), 6560(n), 2085, 6530, 1073, 6550(a), 1017(n,a), 2190(a), 7310(a), and 6535. The dates when the new machines were introduced are as follows: 7037 - 19 February 1918, 5677 - 24 February 1918, 6560 - 1 March 1918 and 1017 - 23 March 1918. These dates could represent the introduction of a new machine immediately after the crash of an earlier one. For example, von Hippel's crash of 2065/17 on 18 February 1918 would be followed by acquisition of a replacement on 19 February. Moreover, his forced landing on 17 February may have resulted in significant damage to his aircraft (5639/17?) and necessitating he fly 2065/17 on 18 February. If we read the date correctly on the bullet hole patch of the machine crashed against the *Stand*, that could only have occurred on or after 24 February 1918, the holes explaining why he flew 5677/17 later(?) on that day. Given that the damage to the aircraft crashed against the *Stand* (7037/17?) was sufficient that it was irreparable at the unit, he would then have received his D.V, possibly 2085 or 1017/17, but 4629/17 seems more likely. Exactly when he flew his 4th (and last?) *Blitz* is uncertain,

70. Crash of von Hippel's second (?) Blitz machine, possibly Albatros D.Va 7037/17. This crash has been attributed to *Vzfw.* Weber, but that is unlikely. the bullet hole patch near the trailing edge of the port upper wing bears a date, as was usually done, and it is definitely '2X.II.18', the 'X' most likely a '4', indicating that the wound was received on 24 February 1918. Other bullet hole patches are visible on starboard lower wing just over the shorter fellow's left shoulder, in the port rear fuselage, and under the cockpit. Also evident are the '*Nicht auftreten!*' stencils near the leading edges of both lower wings. Another in-flight photograph shows white 'H's under the lower wings of what is almost certainly this aircraft.

but perhaps 1017/17 was interim equipment once again and he received a D.Va, perhaps 6550/17 sometime after this date? Obviously, there are many uncertainties in the matter of the serial numbers of aircraft. We can be reasonably certain that the first machine assigned to von Hippel was D.Va 5639/17. There are crash photos of what we are certain was his first machine and they have been dated as 31 December 1917. The crash was not serious and easily repaired, because we know he flew 5639/17 again on 3 January 1918. It seems likely that the machine he is reported to have flown on 1 January 1918 was D.V 2068/17, the machine marked with a simple white band. Quite likely he listed it first because he flew it for a few days in December while 5639/17 was being painted for him and then again during minor repairs to 5639/17. It seems likely his second 'Blitz' was D.Va 7037/17 and is the one crashed against the *Stand*.

His third was a D.V rather retrogressively, and would likely have been either 4629/17 or 2068/17, or 1017/17 probably the first of these. The fourth was another D.Va whose number cannot readily be deduced. Our guess is that it was 6550/17. What is fairly clear is that his first machine was extensively photographed with a broad, fat *Blitz*, painted upper wing surfaces, lozenge under the upper wing (except for the ailerons that were painted!), and blue, likely field-applied, under the lower wings. Support for that field application comes from the fact that the underwing crosses have white surrounds, suggesting they were originally done that way at the factory on undersurface five-colour lozenge fabric overpainted in the field. If this is true, this was clearly a machine in a transition. Black 'H's were also painted beneath the lower wings. The unit tail and spinner colours were applied and the fat *Blitz* was painted on a grey fuselage. There was a white cross painted (possibly white tape?) on the upper surface of the starboard wing near its tip and an identical one in the same location on the lozenge fabric beneath the wing. The significance of these marks is unknown. Its propeller was an Eta. His second *Blitz* was much thinner in proportion than the first and the machine was painted in similar manner to the first. Its wings were entirely lozenge, however. It also had white 'H's under the lower wings and the crosses there were outlined. The fuselage was grey, there was the unit tail, spinner and 10 cm nose ring. The propeller on this and his subsequent aircraft were all Garudas. This is the machine we see crashed against the *Stand* at Boistrancourt and may have been 7037/17. Alternatively, its serial was unrecorded and remains unknown if von Hippel's log is correct and he first flew it on 19 February (and possibly crashed it the same day). If he crashed it that day he had had a remarkable three days; a dead-stick landing on 17 February, losing a wing on 18 February, and cracking up a new machine on 19 February. This crash was by a person unknown and a date unknown, but we suspect von Hippel sometime in March. The third machine had painted wings in all locations and, as we have said, was likely D.V 4629/17. Once again it had the grey fuselage, a still thinner *Blitz*, with red spinner and nose ring and unit tail. Because it was painted throughout it had black 'H's under the lower wings once more, the underwing crosses there were unoutlined. The final *Blitz* we can document was another D.Va with *Jasta* markings, but spinner only red, varnished plywood fuselage unlike the others, with a very thin and stylised *Blitz*, lozenge-covered wings, fat, transitional *Balkenkreuze*, and white 'H's under the lower wings. The only known photograph of it is printed in reverse. Based on the national insignia one would speculate that this is probably either 7310/17, 6560/17, or 6550/17. Given the long time he flew the last (at least 12 March until 21 April 1918), we suspect it was this aircraft. Moreover, because he misidentified D.V and D.Va aircraft routinely (5639/17, 7037/17, 5677/17, and 6560/17 were all D.Vas and 1017/17 and 2190/17 were D.Vs), there is ample confusion in his flight log. Probably not every serial shown was painted with the *Blitz* and there well may have been more than the four we can document. Additionally, the similarity in serial numbers makes us suspicious that 6530+6550+6560 were all the same machine, most likely 6550/17.

Kaiser Wilhelm visited Le Cateau-Cambrésis on 22 December 1917, and *Jasta* 5 flew manoeuvres for him. A dozen or so green-tailed Albatros fighters in flight probably impressed *Seine Majestät*. On this occasion von Hippel flew 2068/17, presumably because

5639/17 had not yet been completely painted. On this day he would also receive his pilot's badge. On Christmas day several pilots were posted away from *Jasta* 5, but there are conflicts about dates in nearly every case. According to the war diary, posted this day were *Leutnant* Hildebrandt to *Jasta* 13, Matthaei to *Jasta* 46 and Christiansen to *Jasta* 46. Also going to *Jasta* 46 was *Vzfw.* Weber. There is no record that Hildebrandt ever came into *Jasta* 5, but here they say he left. This was undoubtedly Robert Hildebrandt who went on to become an ace commanding *Jastas* 12, 69, and 53. Other sources show him coming directly to *Jasta* 13 from *Jastaschule*. The trio going to *Jasta* 46 is more definite, except dates are uncertain and some sources have Matthaei going several days earlier than Christmas. Similarly, other sources show Weber going later, on 10 February, and there is that suggestion that he crashed von Hippel's second (?) *Blitz* in February, even suggested to have been 17 February, but that date seems to be at variance with the date on the bullet hole patch. All three pilots would be killed while serving with *Jasta* 46.

1918 - The beginning of the final act

The new year began with a claim by Könnecke on New Year's day over a Bristol Fighter at Bullecourt. It was not confirmed. On the third, von Hippel flew 5639/17 for what may have been the first time (or the first time since he stood it on its nose on 31 December ?), Mai complained that his Albatros was 'too slow' and repeated this complaint for the next three days. By now he was flying his famous star and crescent-marked D.Va 5284/17 and something must have been done to the engine to improve its performance because he continued to fly this machine until May 1918 and score at least six more victories in it. Bad weather prevented much flying until 13 January, when Rumey, Mai, and Schlömer all scored confirmed victories. Mai's came first at 1158 hrs. over an F2b at Gonnelieu. Ferko's notes list this as an No.11 Squadron machine crewed by 2/Lts. J H Hartley and J E Cross. Henshaw in *The Sky Their Battlefield* does not list this crew this day, or any other. A few minutes later Rumey shot down another No.11 Squadron Bristol at 1215 hrs. at Beaumont, this one was clearly A7174 crewed by 2/Lts. H V Biddington and J H Corbet, the former PoW, the latter killed. Schlömer's claim was an SE5a at 1328 hrs. between Gonnelieu and Honnecourt-sur-Escault. Actually it was FK8 B5826 from No.8 Squadron crewed by Lts. F H Hall and A S Balfour, the former wounded, the latter killed. On 16 January, *Ltn.* Rath joined the squadron. Not much is known about him. Interestingly, he served with the unit quite a long time and in April or May was still flying a D.V with painted wings that bore a large light (white?) circle behind the cockpit with an internal marking that might have been a laurel wreath and black 'R's under the lower wings.

On 19 January, von Hippel received his only confirmed victory of the war, claiming a Sopwith Camel at 1020 hrs. west



▲ 71
71. Still another (third?) *Blitz*, this one a D.V, probably 4629/17. Worth noting are the painted wings, black 'H's, Garuda propeller, and ever-narrowing 'head' on the *Blitz* markings from first to second (?), to this and finally to the fourth (and final?).



▲ 72

of Vendhuile; other sources list it as an SE5a. In either case there is no corresponding British loss, although this might have been Sopwith Camel B5423, '6' of No.54 Squadron flown by 2/Lt. F M or A M Ohrt made PoW that day at about the right time and not too far away. Von Hippel's earlier claim on the Russian Front as a pilot of a two-seater went unconfirmed as did two victories he claimed over Spads later in 1918. On the same day Oblt. Zettlemeyer was assigned as Special Duty Officer and Vzfw. Martin Klein arrived from *Jasta* 27.

The 'Golden Triumvirate' all scored on 28 January. Könnecke shot down an SE5a at 1450 hrs. over Tilloy for his 11th victory. This may have been B610 piloted by Lt. L J Williams from No.56 Squadron MIA. Earlier in the day Mai shot down a Bristol F2b A.7228 '7' of No.11 Squadron at 1210 hrs. over Bourlon Wood. His victims were 2/Lt. S Reay and 2AM. A Patterson, both killed. It was Mai's sixth victory. In the same action Rumey downed another F2b from No.11, B1189 at 1215 hrs. over Graincourt. Both occupants, 2/Lts. J M Milne-Henderson and E A Cunningham were killed. It was Rumey's seventh victory. He would score again the following day to close out the January scoring, DH4, A7600, from No.25 Squadron at 1210 hrs. over St. Quentin, killing Capt. A G Whitehead and Lt. W J Borthistle. On the 30th the *Kette* with Rumey, Mai and Könnecke tangled with SE5as from No.56 Squadron, apparently B and C Flights with neither side being able to claim a victory.

On 2 February, *Jasta* 5 had another pair of inconclusive combats. Around noon they clashed with Bristol F2bs without result and a later patrol after 1400 hrs. with SE5as from No.41 Squadron. A *Kette* from *Jasta* 10 joined in and, although *Jasta* 5 could claim no victories, Lt. Kühn shot down Squadron Commander, Maj. J F Powell. The following day Könnecke claimed a DH4 over Villers Guislain at 1230 hrs., but it was not confirmed and there is no corresponding British loss. A little earlier Mai had tangled with a skilfully-piloted RE8 that simply refused to fall. There followed a couple of weeks of inactivity for *Jasta* 5, due to bad weather, although some air activity was possible farther north in Flanders.

Barber poles in all proportions, the aircraft of Fritz Rumey

A wonderful series of photographs documents the aircraft flown by Vzfw. Fritz Rumey. After his 'demon head' machine Rumey clearly took a fancy to 'wound ribbons' or spiral stripes in basic

72. And the end of *Blitz* number 3 (?). At least it is virtually certain that this is the same machine as in the previous photo.

73. Lt. Hippel's third (?) *Blitz* - probably 4629/17. This poor quality image does at least show the style of lower wing initials - full chord in this instance.

▼ 73



black and white. We don't know for sure when this began, but there are photos documenting several mounts with this sort of marking. We know that he lost an aircraft on 17 February 1918, but we do not know its markings. Almost certainly prior to this there is a photo taken from the tower at Boistrancourt that shows clusters of *Jasta* 5 machines. We have no firm date for it, but it can be dated prior to 18 February by the presence of 2065/17 and certainly into 1918 by, what must have been von Hippel's second '*Blitz*'. Thus a date of 'January or early February 1918' is pretty well confirmed for this photo. It is important not only for what it shows, but for what it does *not* show. Aircraft include:

- 1.- Lehmann's *Edelweiss* machine.
- 2.- 2065 with its dragon.
- 3.- (partially masked by a tree) a dark (red?) fuselage band.
- 4.- no individual marking, but the classic *Jasta* colours, including grey fuselage.
- 5.- similar to 4.
- 6.- apparently the same machine with the *Phönix* seen in July.

7.- Könnecke's machine with the chessboard, either the same one seen in July or a remarkably similar one.

8.- similar to 4 and 5.

9.- black and white chevron-marked machine not seen elsewhere.

10.- a D.III (or D.V/Va) painted white aft of the cockpit with a dark horizontal marking (black bar? = Schlömer?).

11.- a trefoil-marked machine, either the same as in July or one marked just like it.

12.- a D.Va marked with a *Blitz*, quite likely the one seen crashed later against the *Stand*, von Hippel's second (?) machine.

13.- a D.III, obviously the same one seen in the July line-up and listed as *Aircraft No. 16* in that line-up.

14.- an Albatros D.V similar to 4, 5, and 8.

15-18.- In the background and facing the camera are four aircraft, probably three Albatros fighters and one Pfalz, although the distance from the camera is too great to be certain.

Not seen here is any candy-striped machine for Rumey, nor can we confirm the presence of Mai's star and crescent machine (5284/17) that we know he had been flying since November and would continue to fly until May. These may be among the machines facing the camera. We know that Rumey lost a machine on 17 February 1918, badly shot up and bursting into flames when he crash-landed. His heavy flight suit ignited and he was forced to roll on the ground to extinguish the flames. He thus avoided serious injury, but it was a close thing. Barely a week later we can document a striped machine for Rumey, actually the

74. Lehmann's Albatros D.V with *Edelweiss* marking that bears a barely visible bullet hole patch. The wheels appear to be green here. (Colour plate in Vol. 1) Rumey's variably-banded machine is in the background headed into hangar number 3 that still bears the plaque over the door with the demon's head.

▼ 74

first, in a photo taken on 25 February, when he and Mai had machines decorated with bones and Rumey's had the basic black and white stripes that would characterise his aircraft for some time. It is not likely that this was the beginning of his 'barber pole' markings, but the loss of a machine so recently suggests that this one was new. What must be this machine was photographed about three months later, complete with bone, but had almost certainly been rearmed by that time. The two bone-marked machines of *Jasta 5* on 25 February, had the Siemens-Schuckert machine guns capable of a cyclic rate of fire of 1400 rounds per minute. The pilots were photographed with an uncomfortable-looking *Engineer Kändler* (or *Kaendler*) from Siemens both with the aircraft and at a party in his 'honour' that evening. One has to think that the bones were added because of the weapons, but we have not been able to find any explanation for their significance. Perhaps there was some play on words involving either *Knochen*, or it seems more likely, *Bein*. The latter is used in many expressions conveying its other meaning of 'leg' hence running. With this rate of fire the weapons certainly ran, whether there is any connection with the bone emblems or not. The pilots were forbidden to fly these machines across the lines for fear the Allies would find and copy these weapons. The very next day Rumey scored a victory at Busigny, clearly behind German lines, but it is not known if this victory (or any other) was scored with these guns. Neither pilot would score again until Rumey's victory of 17 March that was probably not this Albatros. At least the bone machine is not visible in a photograph taken that day and there are two machines that clearly 'belonged' to Rumey in the line-up. It is just possible that the spiral band machine with the bone was away being rearmed at this time because it reappeared after the unit left Boistrancourt and the machine survived until May at least, by that time the guns had almost certainly been replaced with conventional armament. Little has been written about these fascinating weapons, but it seems probable that such a rate of fire could only have been achieved if the aircraft's engine drove the firing mechanism of

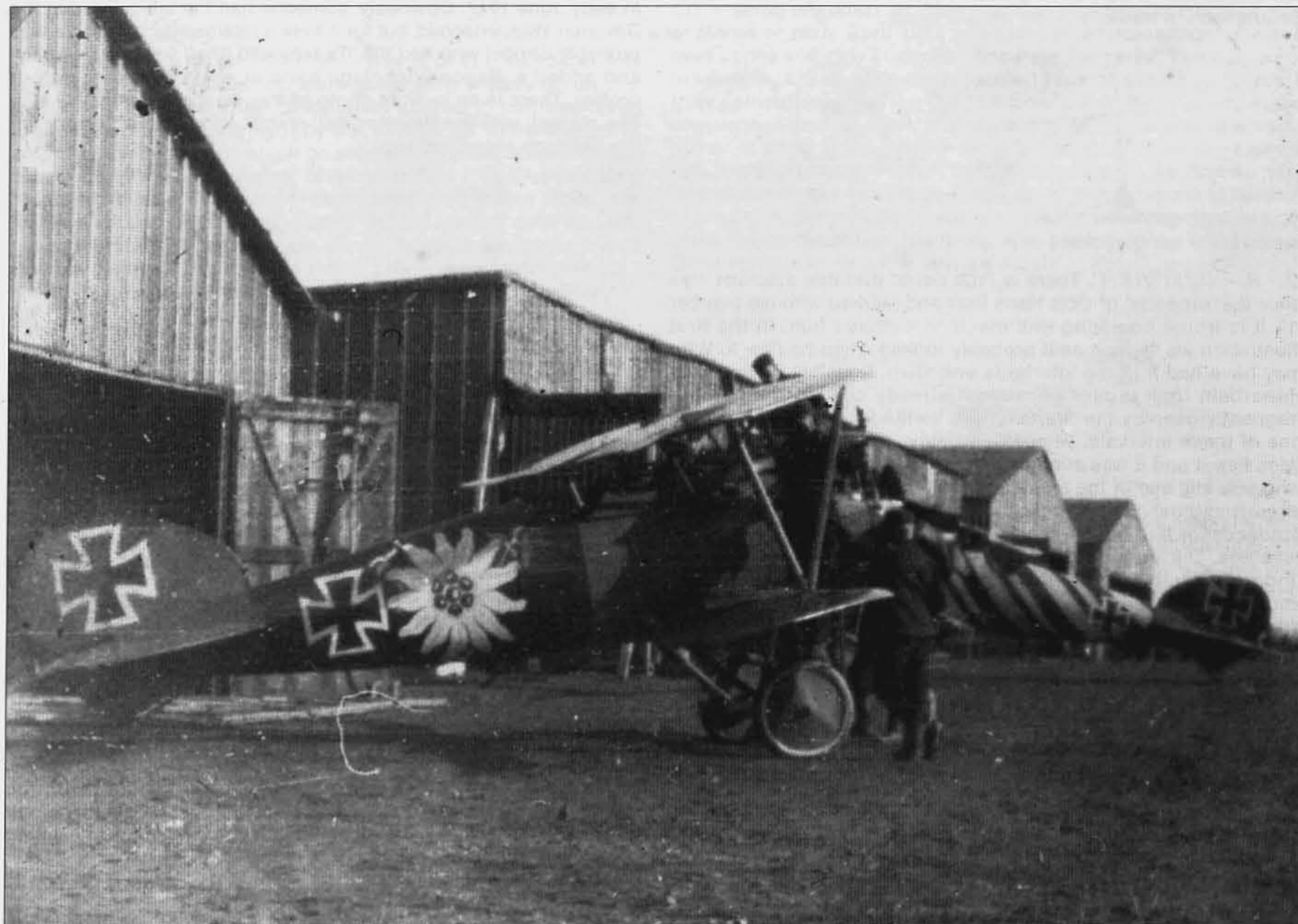
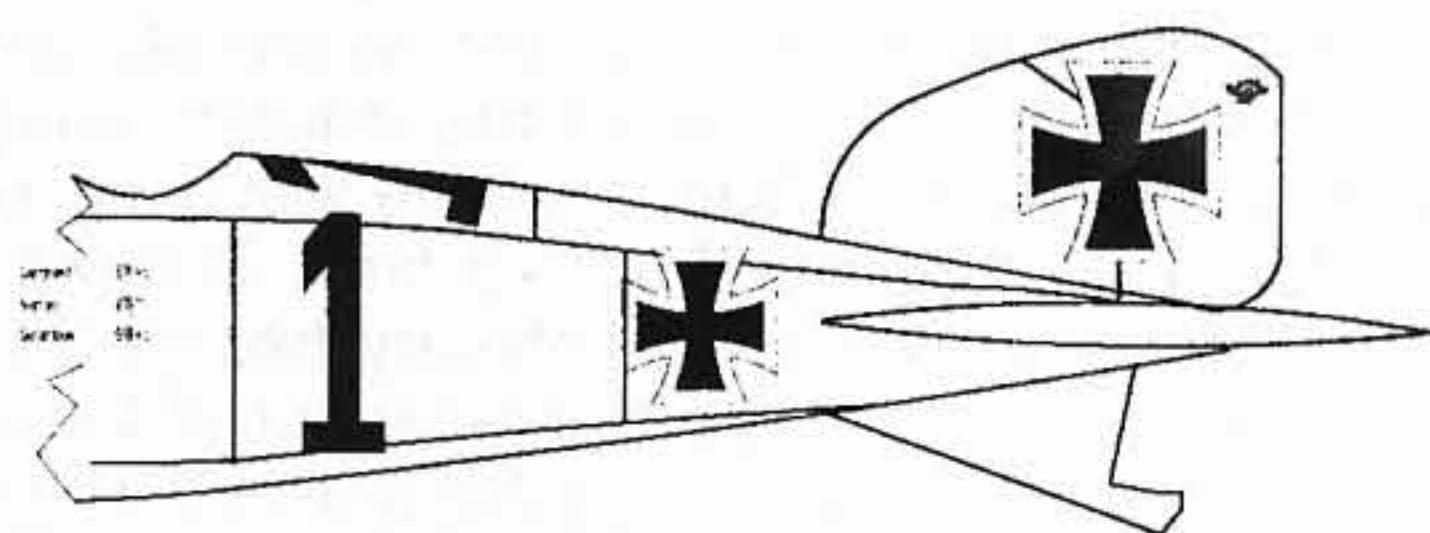
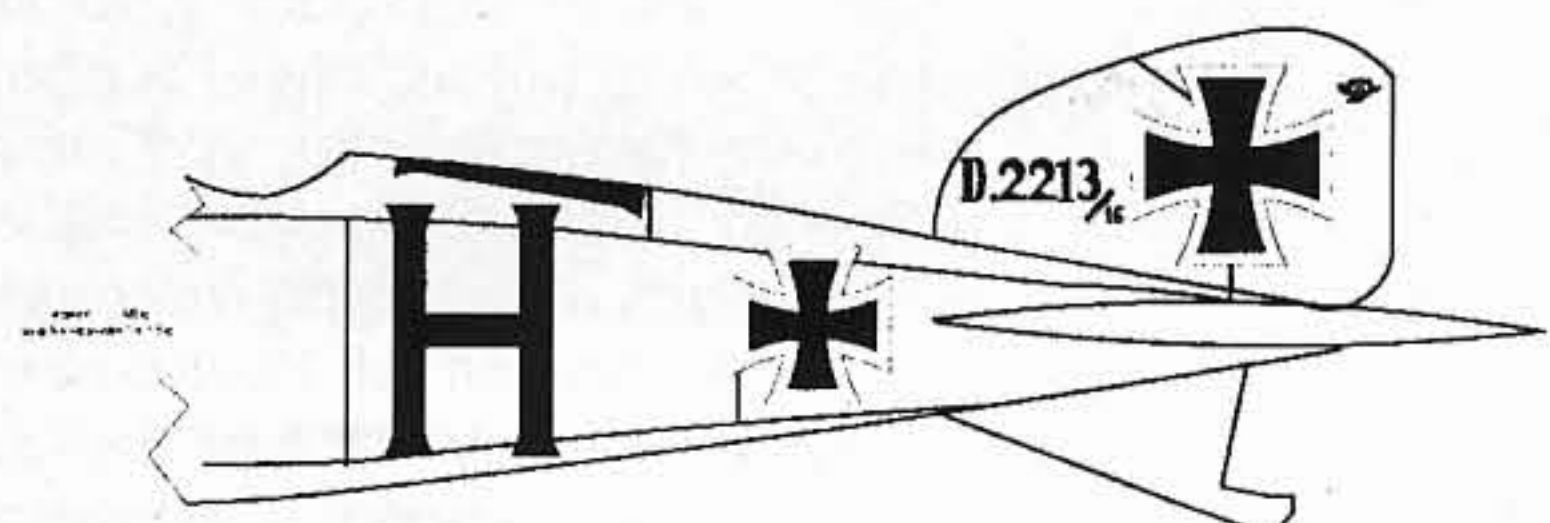


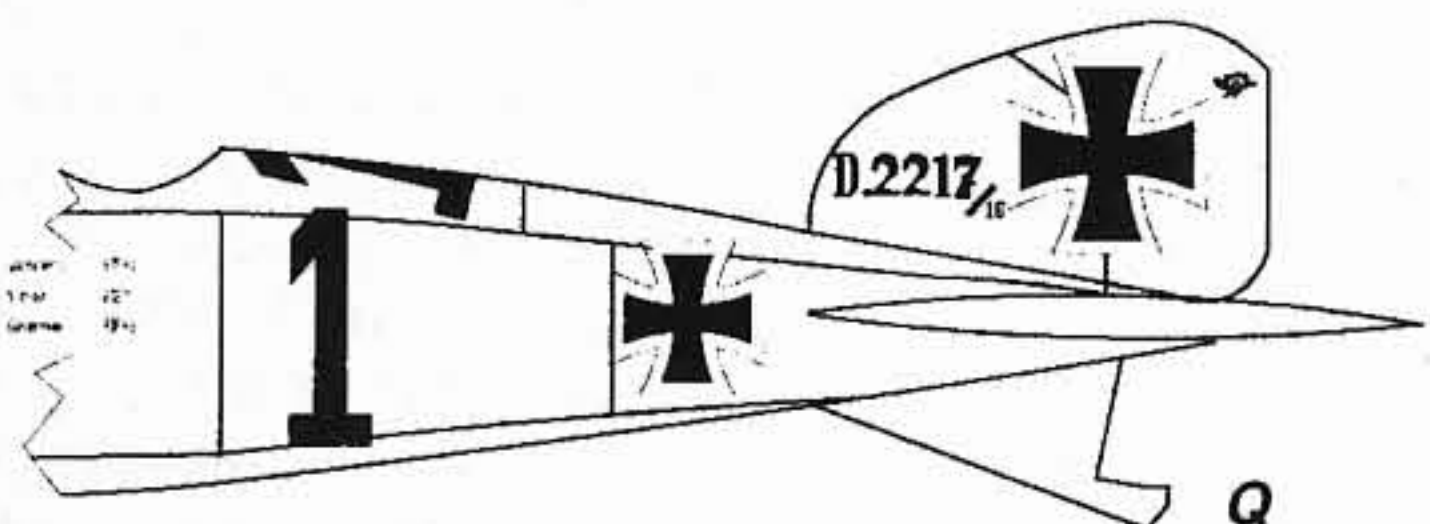
Figure C. - Albatros D.IIIs of *Jasta 5*



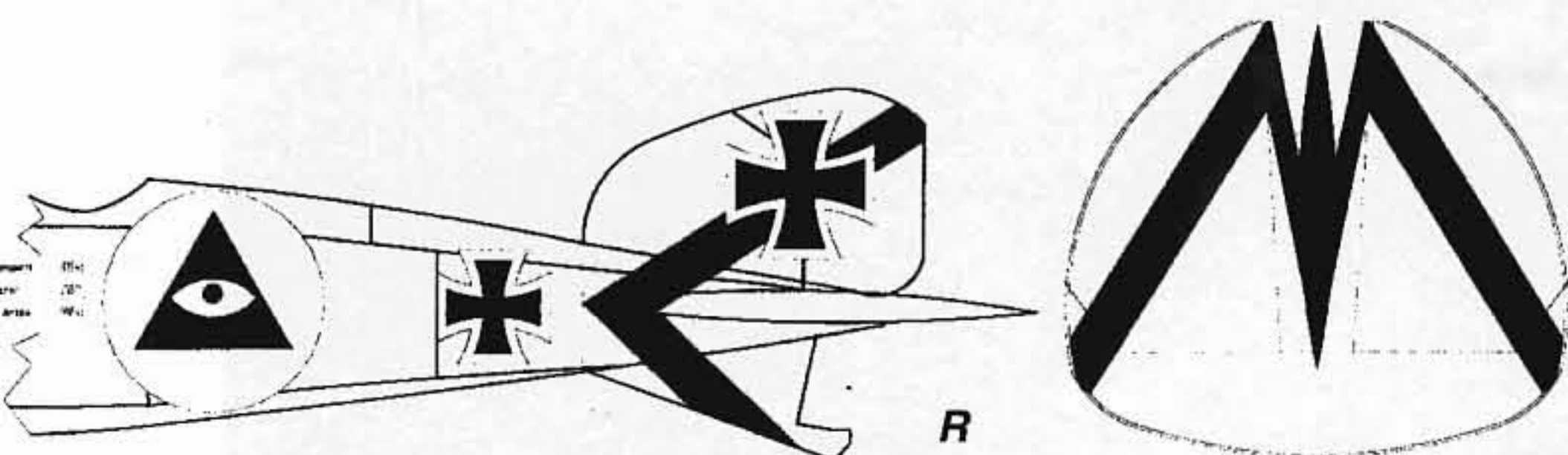
O. - Serial unknown. This machine appears in the famous line-up photographs that were taken in March or early April 1917. Just how early if in April is an important, but indeterminable issue, because it would be important to know if the photo was taken before or after Hans Berr's death on 6 April. Berr's regular mount, as recently as 1 April 1917 had been D.III 2256/16, but he was not flying it when he was killed because Nathanael flew that machine on 12 April. Thus this could be 2256/17 before or after 6 April. It could be his former mount, shown below; D.III 2217/16, now probably awaiting remarking. Berr is also credited with flying 2250/16, but that may be a typo for 2256/16. Or this machine could be whatever machine Berr was flying when he was killed, marked with his number '1' and its identity may be lost forever.



P. - D.2213/16 'H'. This machine is in the line-up also. Through much of April and May 1917 it was flown by Josef Mai, although there are reports of it having been flown earlier by Schneider or Schuhmann. It had a two-line weight table.

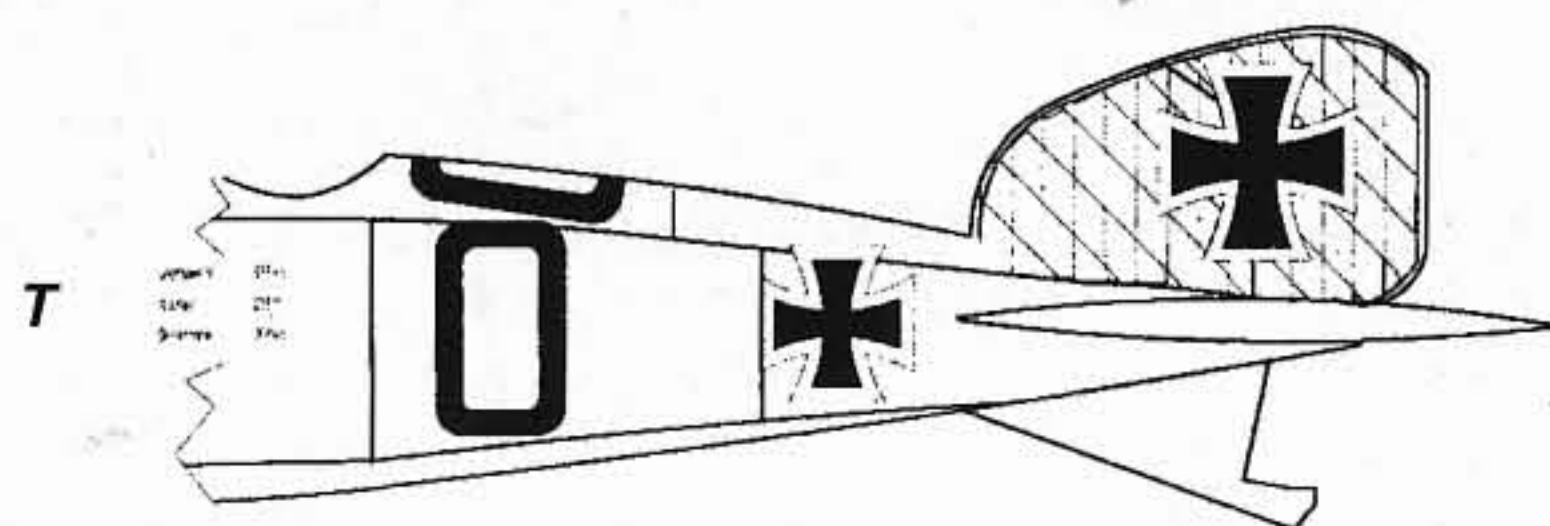
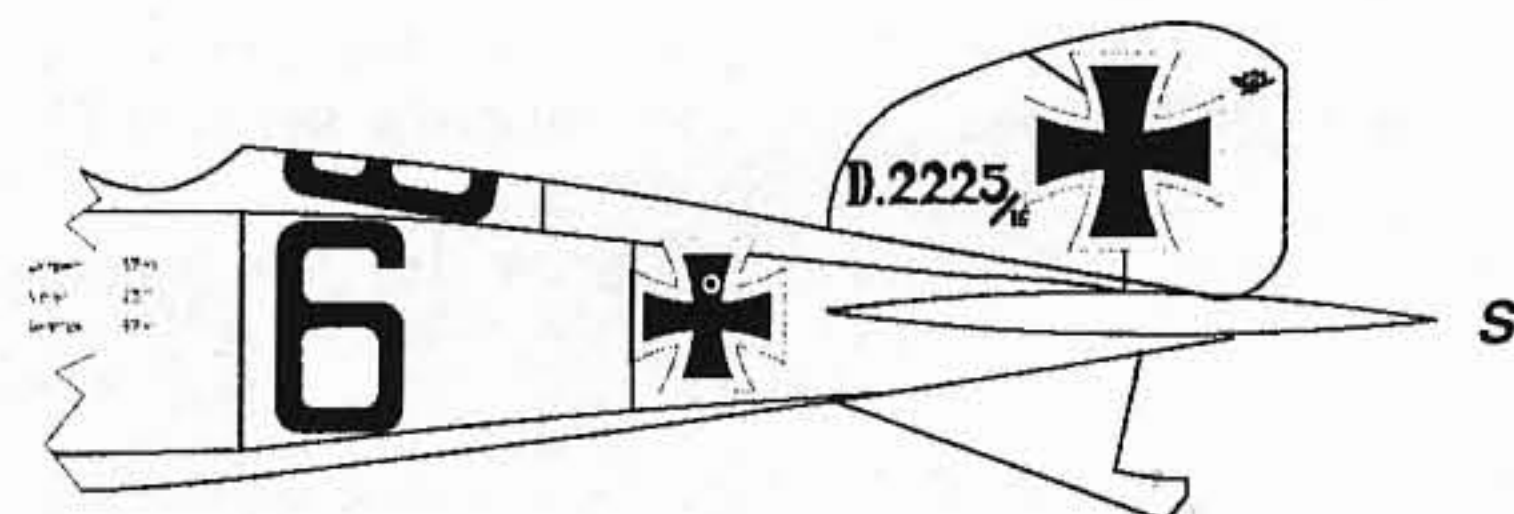


Q. - R. - D.2217/16 '1'. There is little doubt that this machine was once the 'property' of *Oblt.* Hans Berr and marked with his number '1'. It is ironic how long this machine outlived him. In the first illustration we show it as it probably looked when he flew it. Who may have had it in the interim is unknown. Possibly *Hptm.* Hans Hünenbein took it over because it already carried the number frequently used by the *Staffelführer*. *Vorländer* also flew it during one of these intervals. After Hünenbein's death it is unlikely that Voss flew it and it was eventually passed down to *Vzfw.* Josef Mai, who was still one of the most junior pilots in the unit. Mai flew this aircraft extensively during June and July 1917 and he or some predecessor had an 'all-seeing eye' painted on each side of the fuselage. During a part of this time the tail unit was entirely in undersurface blue with black stripes as shown. Black '1s' still appeared under each lower wing and probably did so until the aircraft was written off. With the dawn of the 'green-tailed era' this

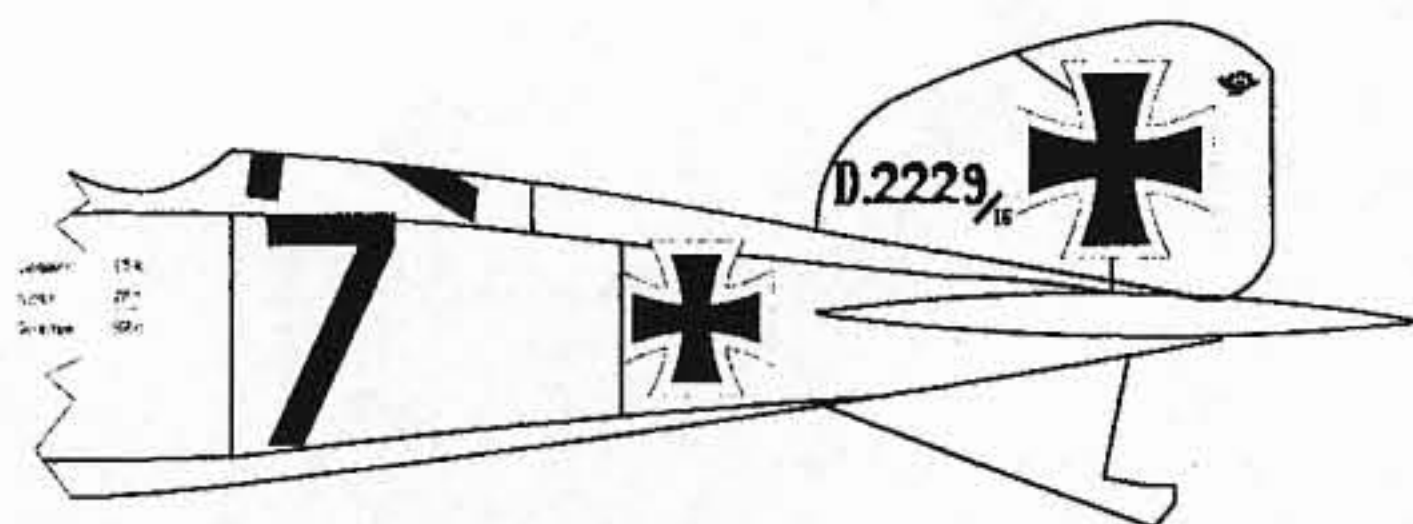


was overpainted in standard *Jasta 5* manner. On 25 July 1917 it was flown by *Uffz.* Walter Reichenbach who crashed landed it (see

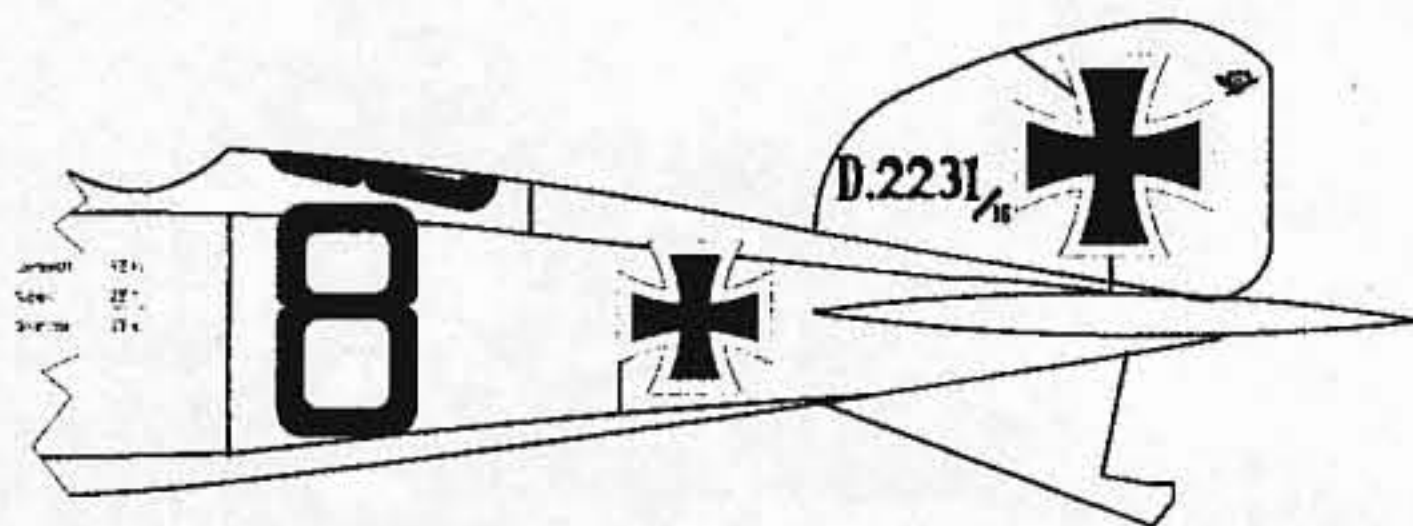
colour profile from the July 1917 line-up). The machine was stood upon its nose and Reichenbach was injured, but recovered, either from a wound suffered in the air or from being thrown from the cockpit in the minor crash. The damage was significant, but repairable, and probably would have been had the machine not been as old as it was.



S. - T. D.2225/16 '6' and 'O'. This is another machine that is well known, but one with a significant history of marking changes as well. It was supposedly first marked with a '6', but there is no photographic confirmation. It first appears photographically in that line-up in March or April 1917 with its serial evident and the 'O' marking on fuselage sides and top. There is also an in-flight photo in the same marking, but another probably taken soon after shows it in the guise we see in illustration 'T'. It is reported that it was flown by *Uffz.* Jakob Weiss who was with the unit in March to May 1917. It was then taken over by a *Ltn.* Strobel of whom very little is known except that he was a Bavarian who served with the unit for a time commencing 28 May and may have scored a victory in early June 1917. Obviously, someone had the tail painted in the Bavarian *Wappenschild*, but for a time it retained its number. It was probably Strobel who had the 'O's removed (they still show slightly) and added a diagonal fuselage band at some time (see colour profile). There is an in-flight photo of this machine, ostensibly with him aboard, with the Bavarian tail, and 'O' under the wings and on the fuselage sides and top.

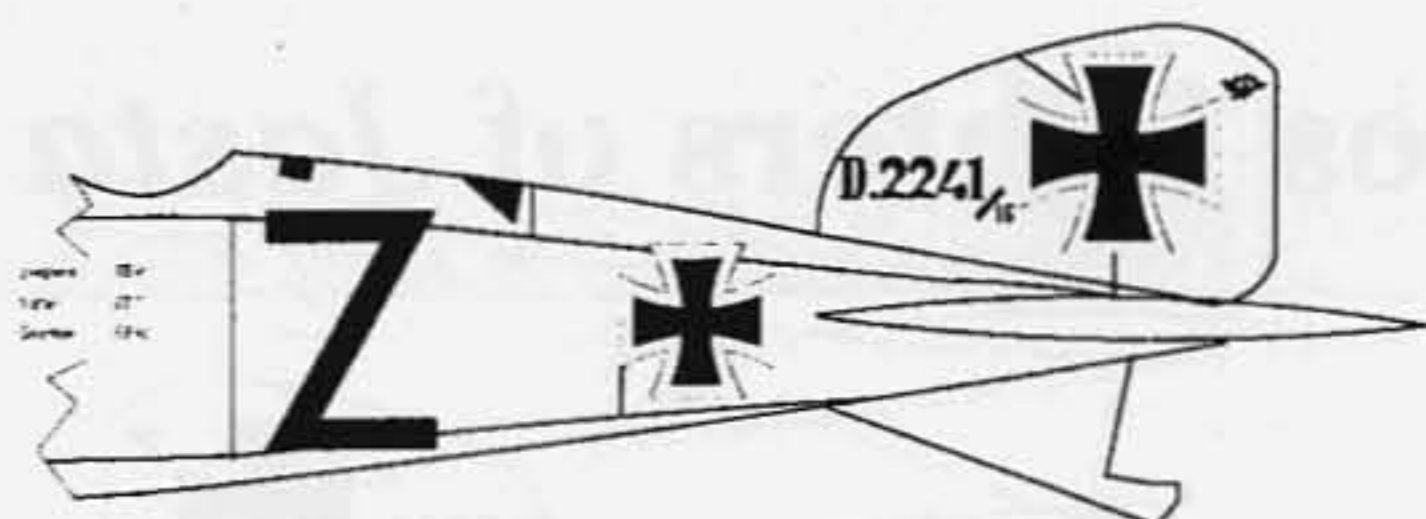


U. - D.2229/16 '7'. This machine was flown by *Uffz.* Ernst Dahlmann who joined *Jasta 5* on 23 February and killed on 1 June 1917 after having scored one confirmed and one unconfirmed victory.

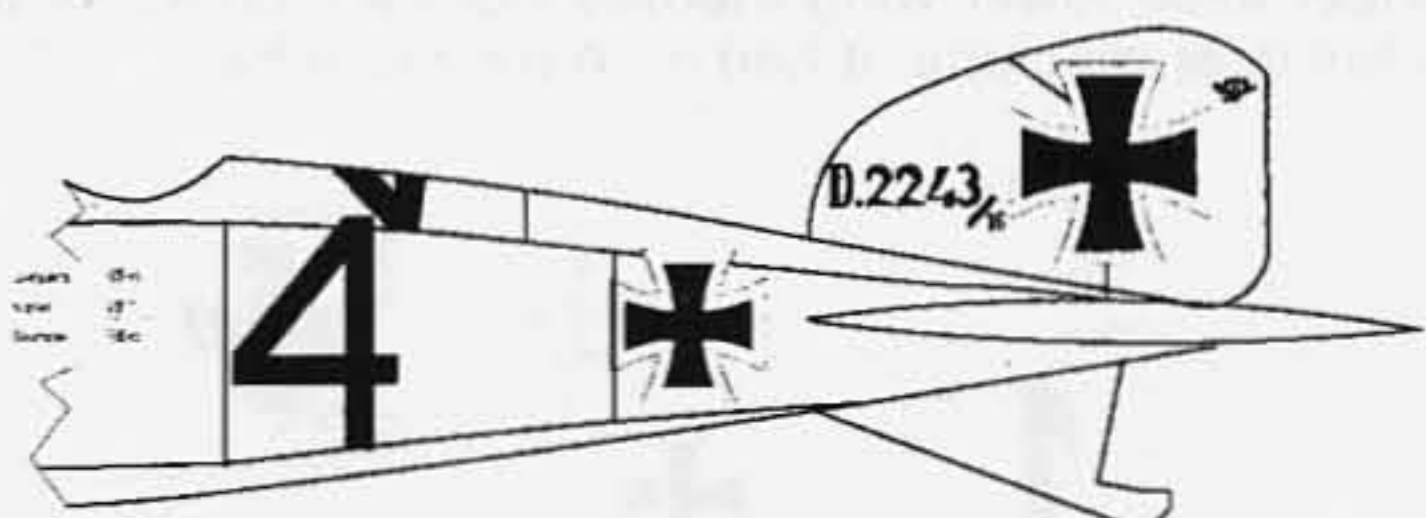


V. - D.2231/16 '8'. This is another machine flown by *Ltn.* Rudolf Nebel and is seen in a pair of line-up photos. The fuselage was overpainted a solid dark colour (green?) and the belly left unpainted. Axial propeller. Another of his machines was marked with the same number, but only the tail unit was overpainted a dark colour. The possibility remains, of course, that those are stages in painting the same aircraft.

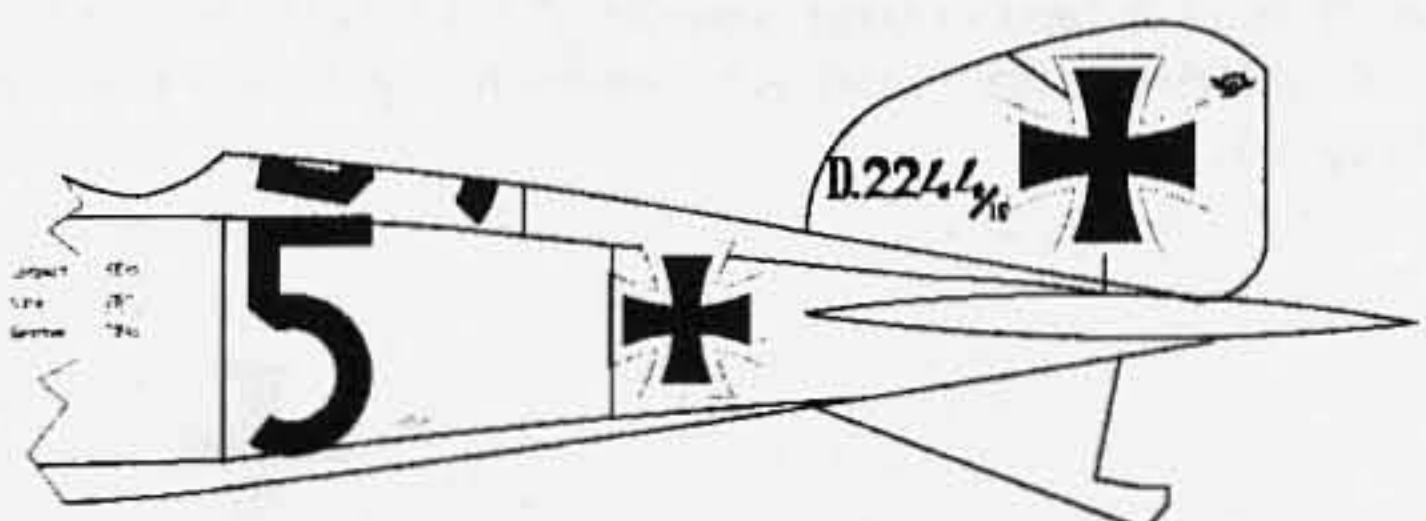
W. - D.2241/16 'Z'. There is another irony regarding assignment of machines and the survivorship of machines *versus* men. This



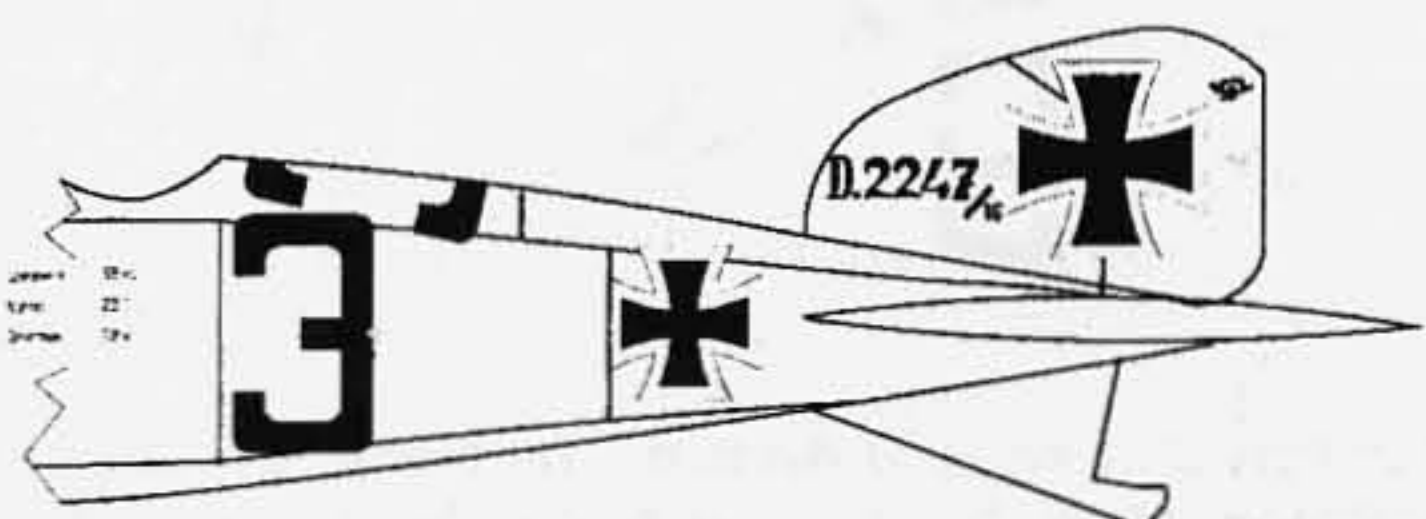
machine was assigned to Vzfw. Paul Hoppe who is confirmed as having flown it on 1 April 1917. However, he definitely was not flying it when he and *Oblt.* Hans Berr collided, resulting in the death of both men and the destruction of both machines. It is also known that Vzfw. Hans Löwensen flew the machine on 14 April. It is possible, even likely, that this machine was formerly marked with a '6', but this was changed to a 'Z' after Hoppe's death.



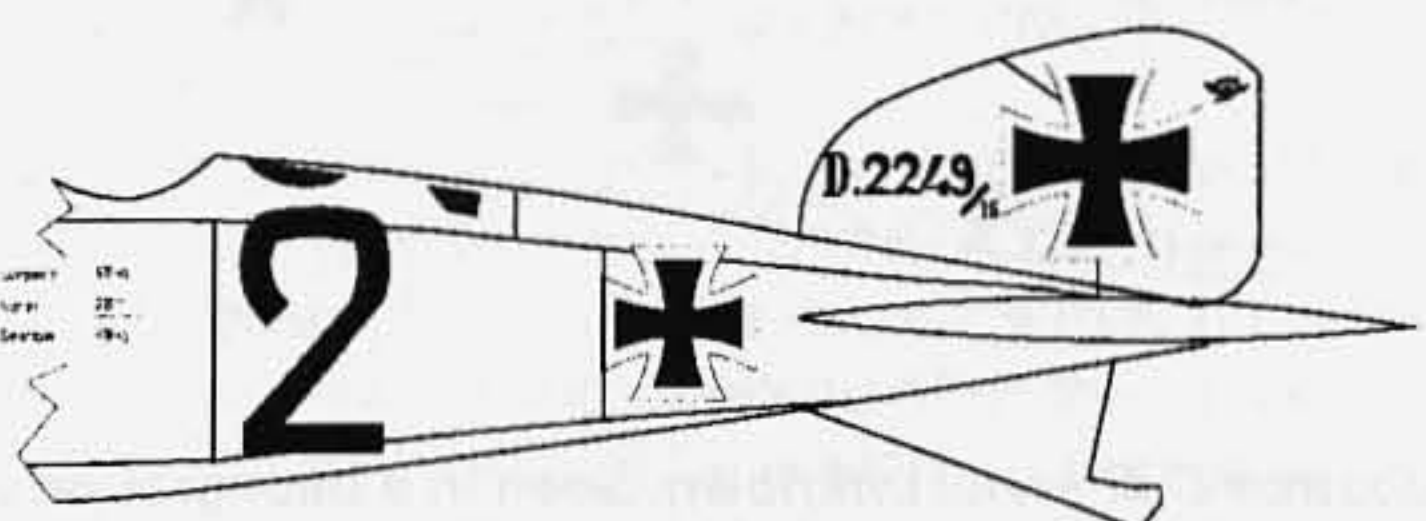
X. - D.2243/16 '4'. Vzfw. Heinrich Büssing was a founding member of *Jasta 5* and served with the unit well into 1917 whereupon he was commissioned and transferred to *Kest 4b*. During his long and distinguished service with *Jasta 5* he scored at least two confirmed and two unconfirmed victories and flew this machine for a time. Hünnerbein also posed in front of this machine. Axial propeller.



Y. - D.2244/16 '5'. This was the regular mount of *Ltn.* Kurt Schneider who was one of the brightest stars in the early history of *Jasta 5*. A founding member of the unit, he had scored 15 confirmed victories (and one unconfirmed) by the time of his wounding on 14 July 1917, wounds from which he died weeks later. Schneider had abandoned this D.III in favour of Albatros D.V 1066/17 some time before his death. This machine was repainted with a white rear fuselage with a dark encircling band and the *Jasta 5* nose and tail, but retaining the '5s' under the wings. In the latter guise it was flown by Heinrich Büssing and shows prominently in the July 1917 line-up photos (see photo and colour profile). Axial propeller.

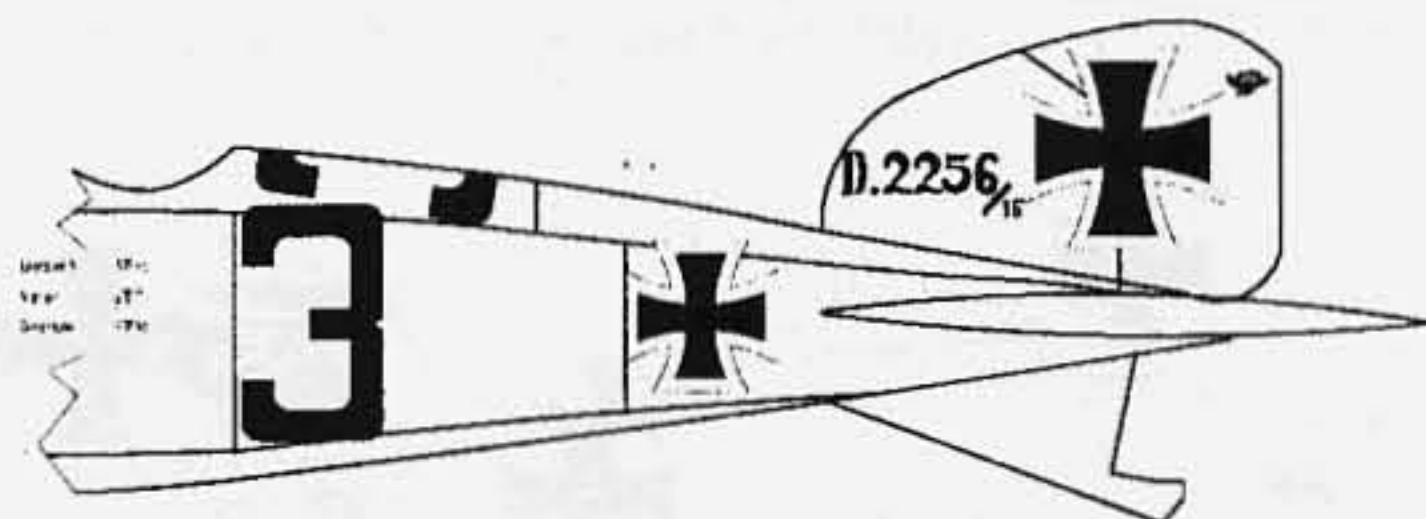


Z. - D.2247/16 '3'. There is a good photo of *Offst.* Edmund Nathanael posing beside this machine. Nathanael had a meteoric career with *Jasta 5*; during a two-month period from 6 March to 6 May 1917 he scored 15 confirmed victories. He was killed, likely in this machine, on 11 May 1917. He also flew 2234/16 with a similar marking.

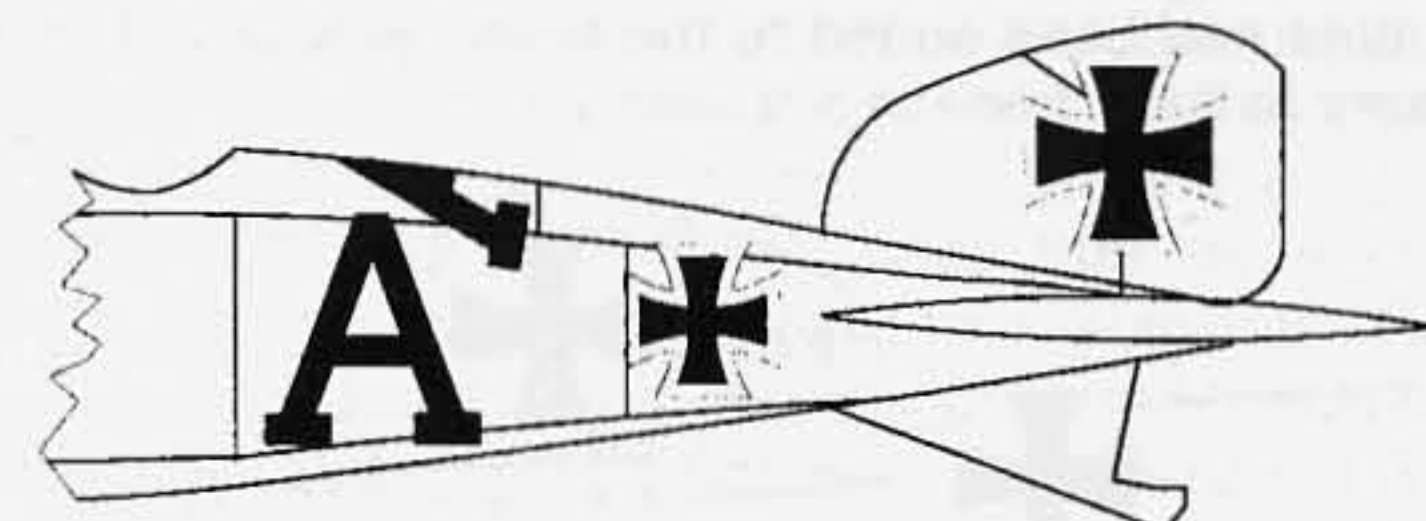


AA. - D.2249/16 '2'. This is perhaps the most successful of all the Albatros D.IIIs flown by *Jasta 5* and the regular mount of *Ltn.*

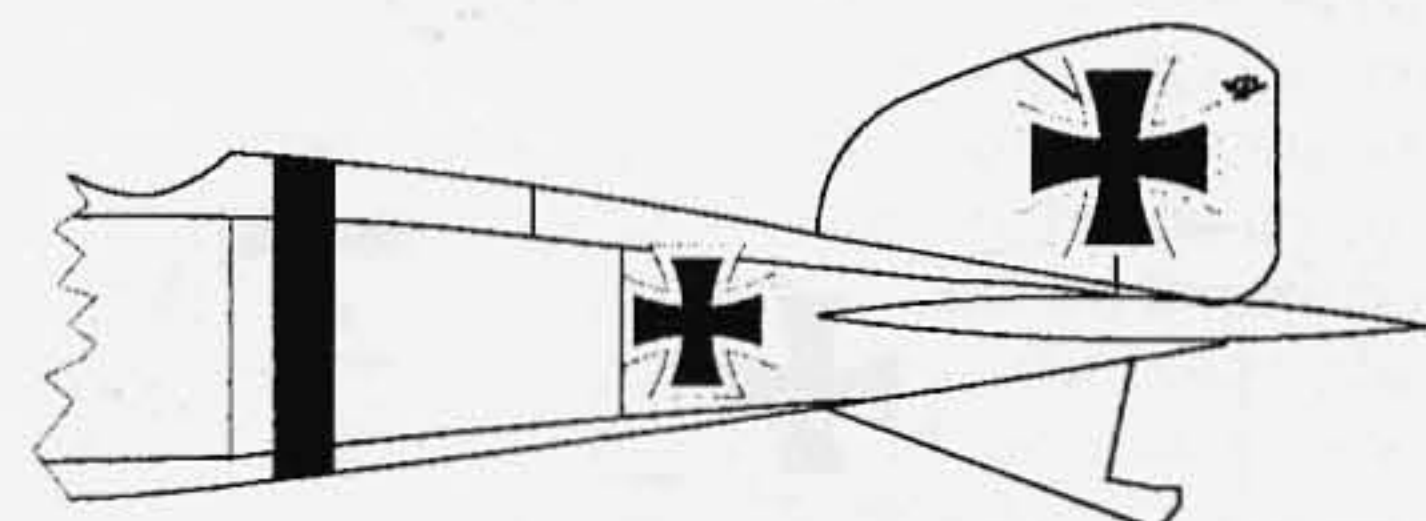
Heinrich Gontermann who scored most of the 17 victories he gained with the unit while flying it. Gontermann became one of the most famous 'balloon busters' on either side of the war and nearly half of his 39 total victories were over balloons. After Berr's death he was the acting *Staffelführer* until Hünnerbein's arrival. During the latter's tenure Gontermann left *Jasta 5* to become *Staffelführer* of *Jasta 15* and served there until he was killed by structural failure of an early Fokker triplane (115/17) on 30 October 1917. Löwensen also posed with this machine, probably after Gontermann's departure and there is an in-flight photo that credits him with being the pilot. It had an Axial propeller.



BB. - D.2256/16 '3'. This is the machine that was supposedly assigned to Hans Berr which may have carried his number '1', but that he was not flying when he was killed. As mentioned above it may be the same machine as that in illustration 'O'. By anecdotal evidence we are told that this machine, bearing the number '3' when photographed, was also flown by Nathanael at least on 11 May 1917. This may be true, but it is also possible that that report confuses it with D.2247/16, which we are convinced he did fly. This machine also had an Axial propeller.



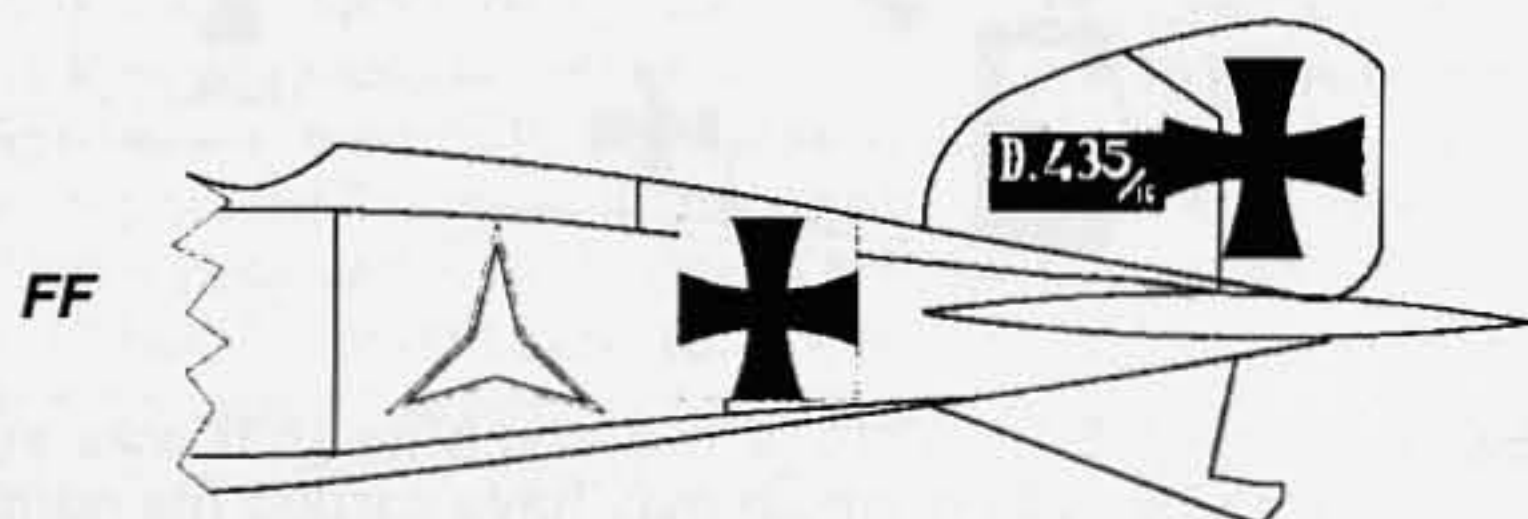
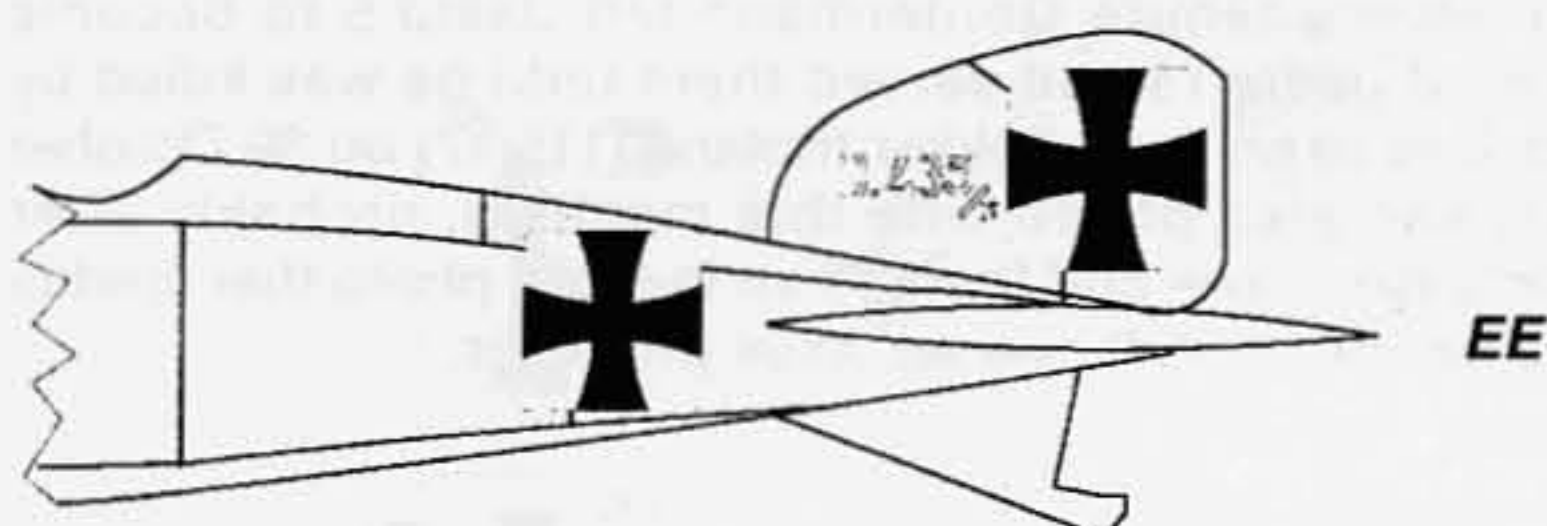
CC. - serial unknown 'A'. This machine also figures in the photos of March or early April 1917 and had had a camouflage smeared over upper and side surfaces obscuring the serial. The bottom of the fuselage may have been painted blue. It seems to be more than coincidence that the D.II that bore the white 'A', had similar camouflage and we think it likely that both aircraft had the same owner at some point in their service histories. There are reports that this machine was flown by one 'Könemann'. We find no pilot by that name here or elsewhere and, given the variations in spelling of his name, perhaps Kleymann was meant. Somehow that assignment seems consistent, but it was also photographed with Neisen. Once again, the propeller was an Axial.



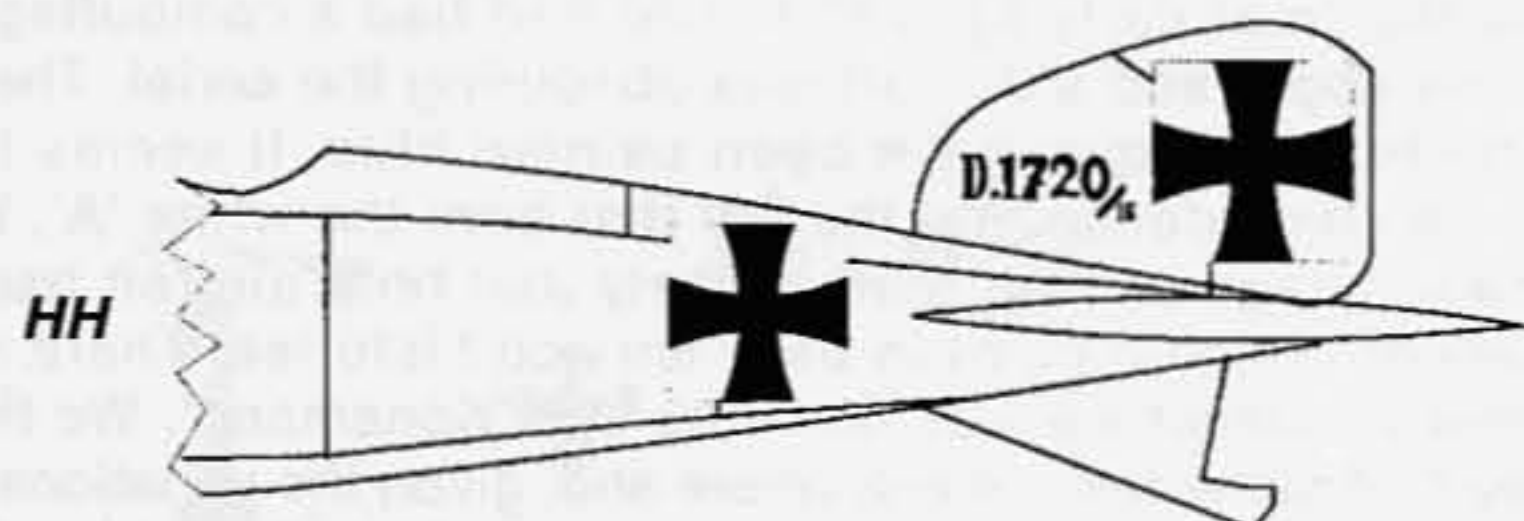
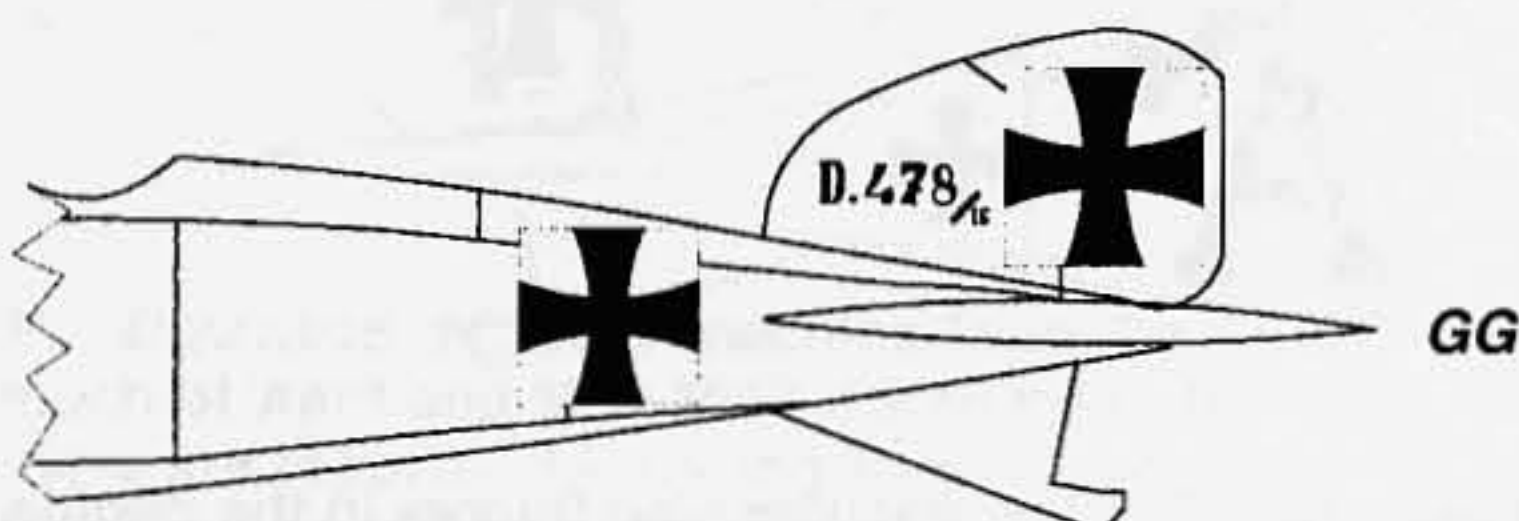
DD. - serial unknown ('dark (black?) band'). This machine was photographed beside the machine numbered '1' (illustration 'O') outside hanger No.1. In that location it seems likely that this was either the back-up machine of the *Staffelführer* or that of his deputy. Given that no deputy was designated to our knowledge, we suspect this was Berr's reserve aircraft.

These drawings and those that appear in *Volume 1* on pages 4, 5, 12 and 13 are purely to show the particular markings of these machines and for guidance only. Scale drawings of all aircraft appear in various other *Albatros Productions* titles: *DATAFILE No.15 Fokker E.III; Halberstadt Fighters; DATAFILE No.47 Roland D.II; MINI DATAFILE No.11 Fokker D.V; DATAFILE No.100 Albatros D.I/D.II; Albatros D.III Special and Albatros Fighters.* □

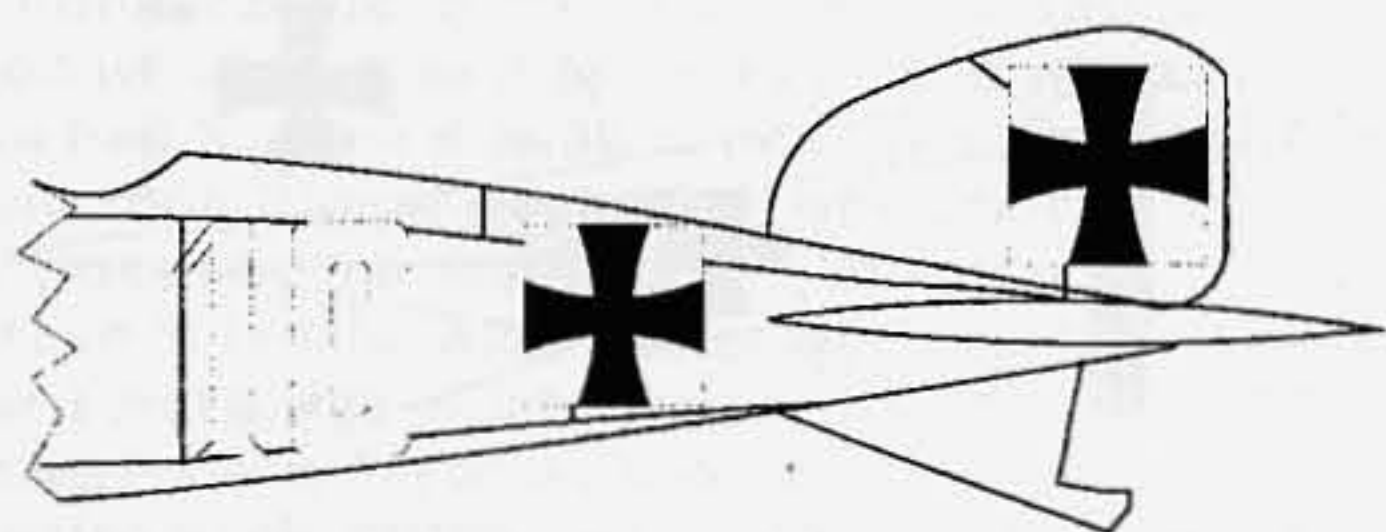
Figure D. - Additional Albatros fighters of *Jasta 5*.



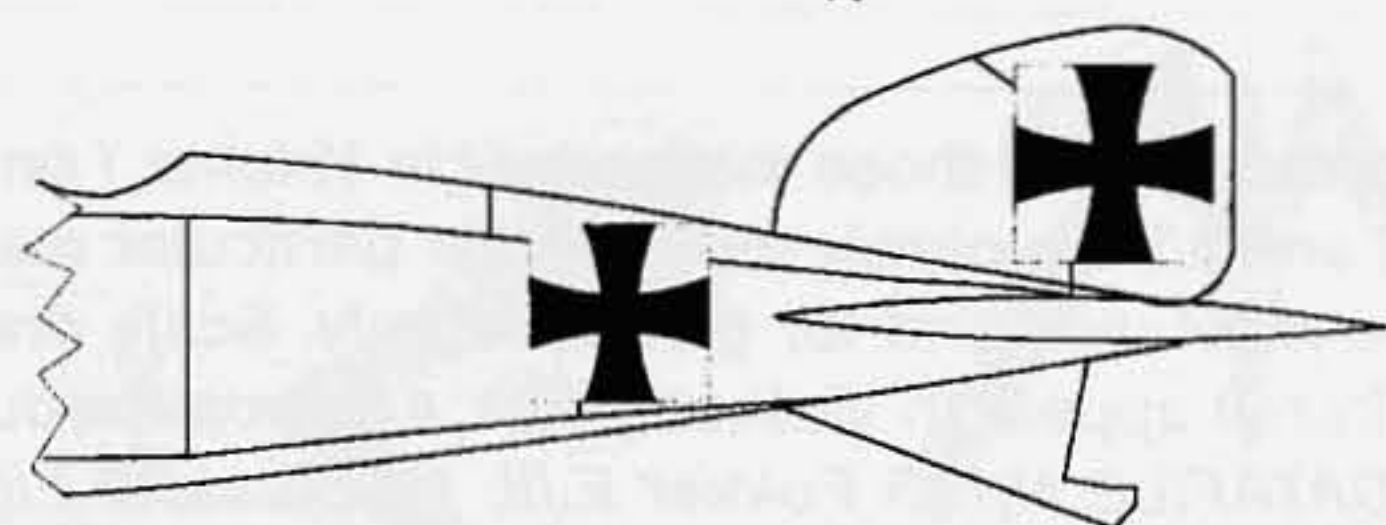
EE. - FF. - Albatros D.I 435/16. This aircraft is attributed to *Ltn. Spitzhoff* in *Jasta 5*, but there is severe doubt that either he or it served there. As described in the text, it was camouflaged in green and brown above and blue below with the serial in white on the fin. It had the early style Axial propeller. Later we see it with a white fin and rudder and the white serial retained in a dark box, the dark brown of the original camouflage. A white *dreispitziger Stern* with black outline had been added to the fuselage sides. By this time it was likely to have been in a training unit.



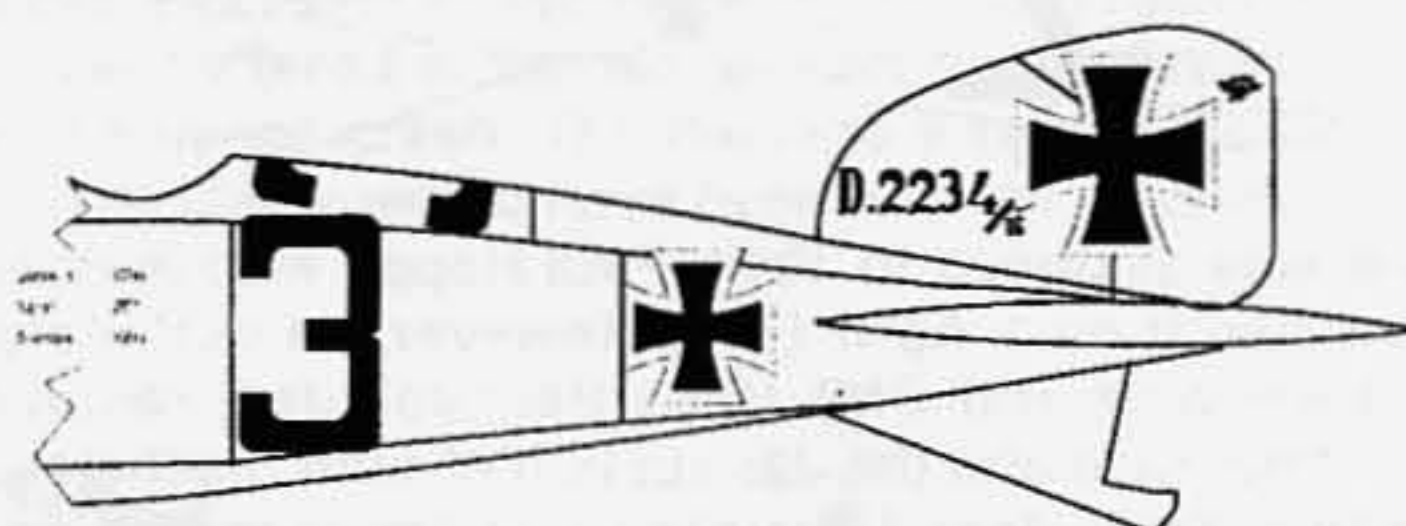
GG. - HH. Two early Albatros fighters that can be confirmed as having been at *Jasta 5*. There are no distinctive markings.



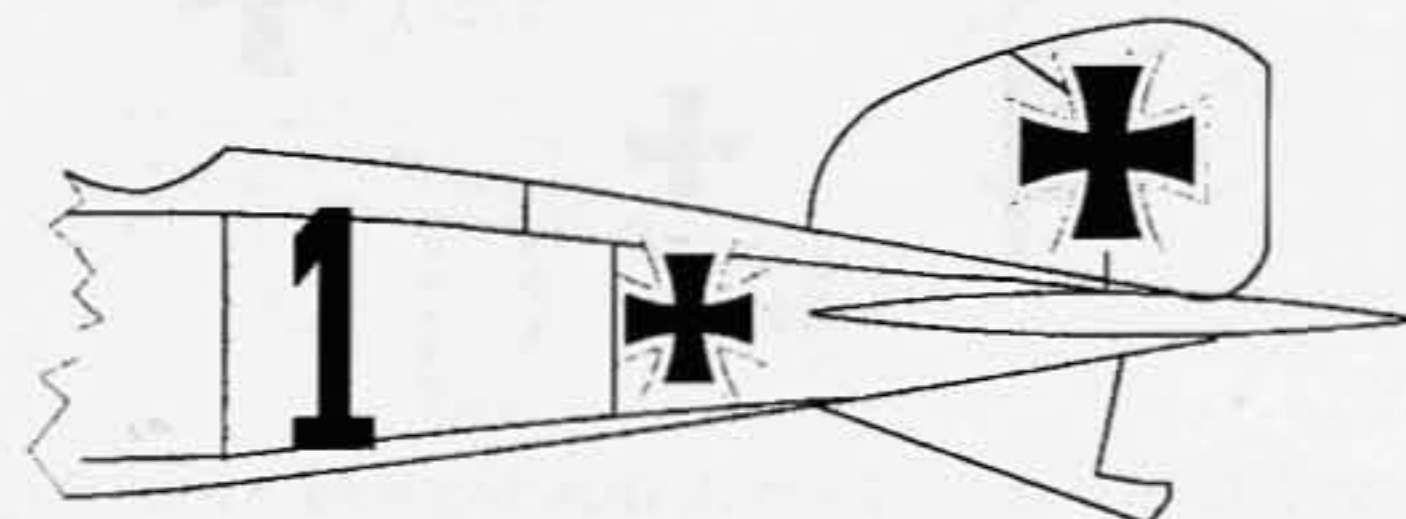
II. - Albatros D.II serial unknown. This was probably also a supernumerary aircraft with a high number, a white '10' on each side of the fuselage. Crashed by *Offst. Klein* on 6 February 1917, that tied him with *Nebel* in wrecking two aircraft in two days!



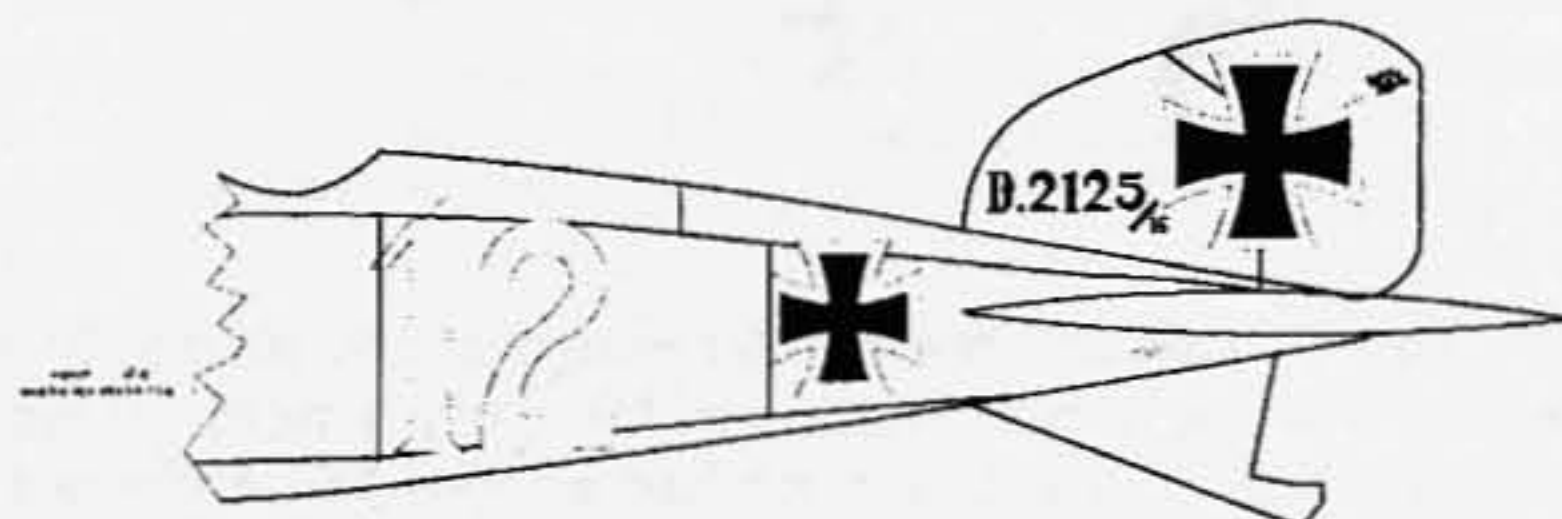
JJ. - Albatros D.II serial unknown. This machine was field camouflaged obscuring its serial, probably with a green base and smudged with dark reddish brown.



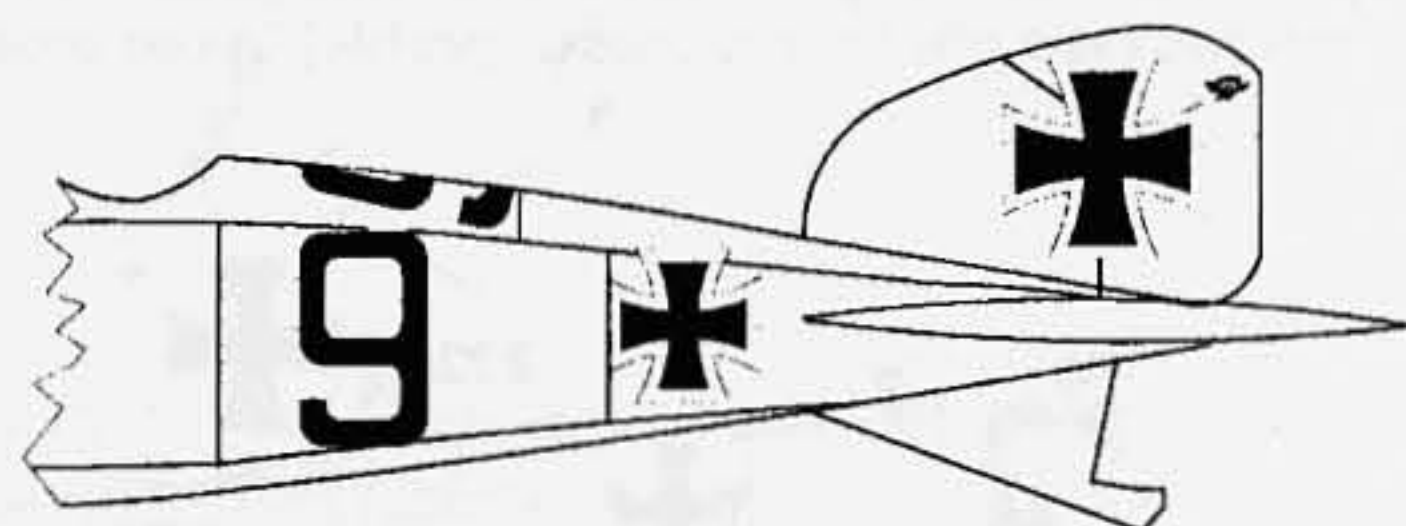
KK. Albatros D.III 2234/16. This was the earlier D.III flown by *Nathanael*. There would presumably be a black '3' at nearly full chord under each lower wing inboard from the cross as was the case on his later machine. It had an Axial propeller.



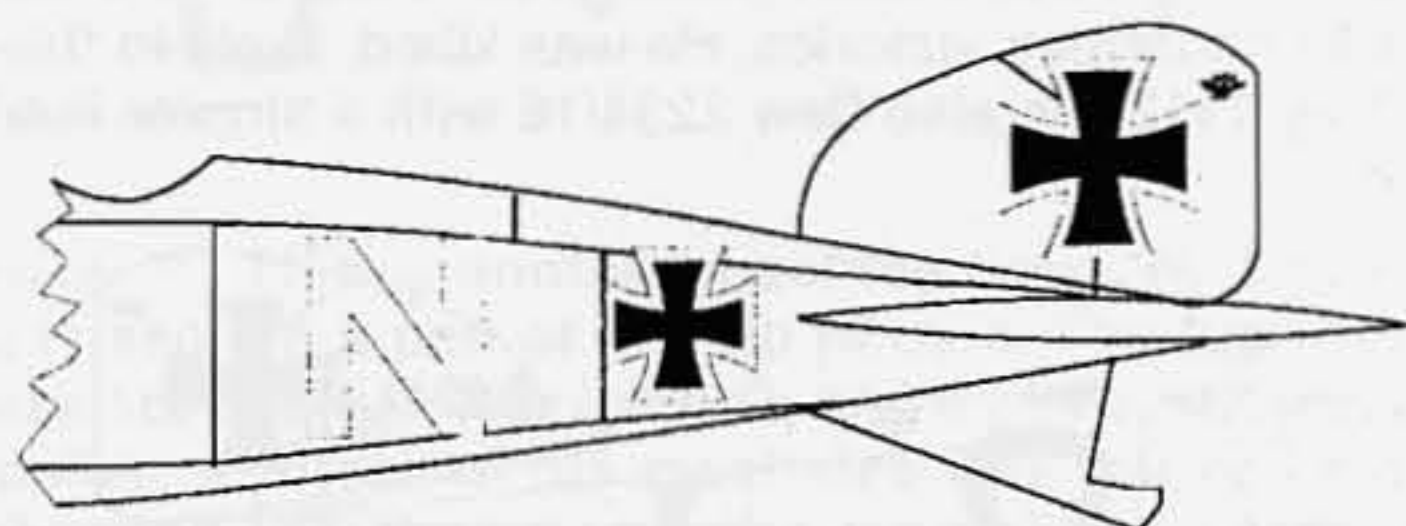
LL. Albatros D.III serial unknown. We are including this machine for completeness, although it may actually be one of the others shown with a black '1' on each side of the fuselage. Nevertheless, we cannot attribute this with confidence to any of the others and there remains a distinct possibility that this was a separate machine. It had a two-colour smeared camouflage on the fuselage, an Axial propeller, and was reportedly flown by *Vorländer* during May 1917.



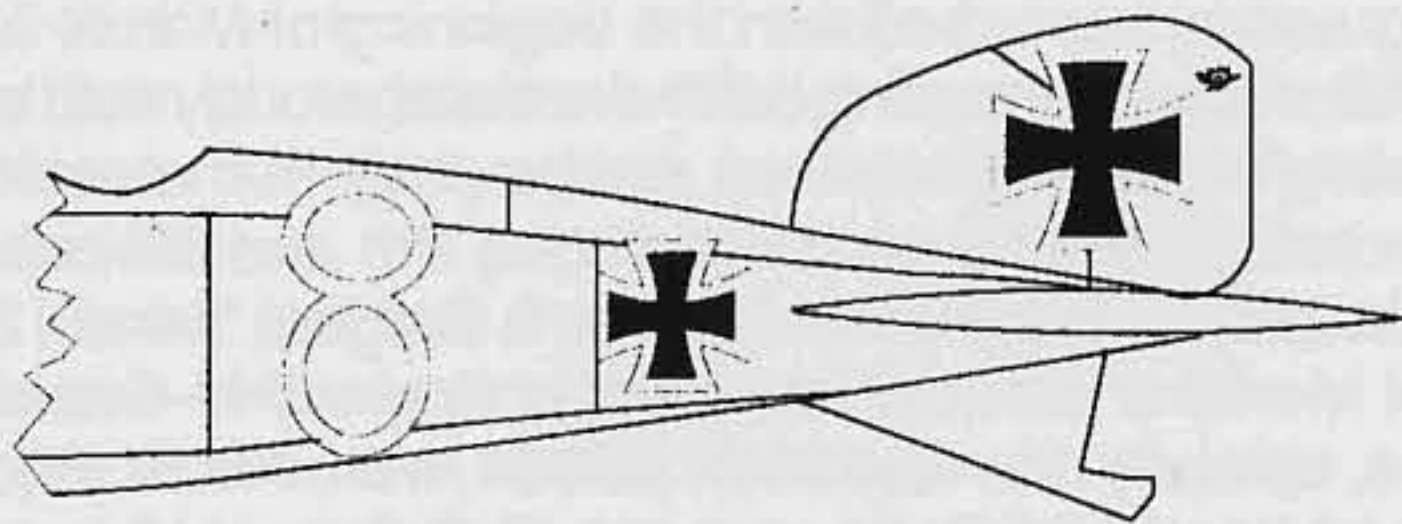
MM. - Albatros D.III 2125/16. This is like to have been another supernumerary and the high white number strongly suggests it. Alternatively, it may have been a school machine, the album containing the photograph does not specify.



NN. - Albatros D.III serial unknown. The black '9' on this machine is in a different style than the more rounded one on the machine (1765/16) flown by *Josef Mai*. It is not known if this was a later machine of his.

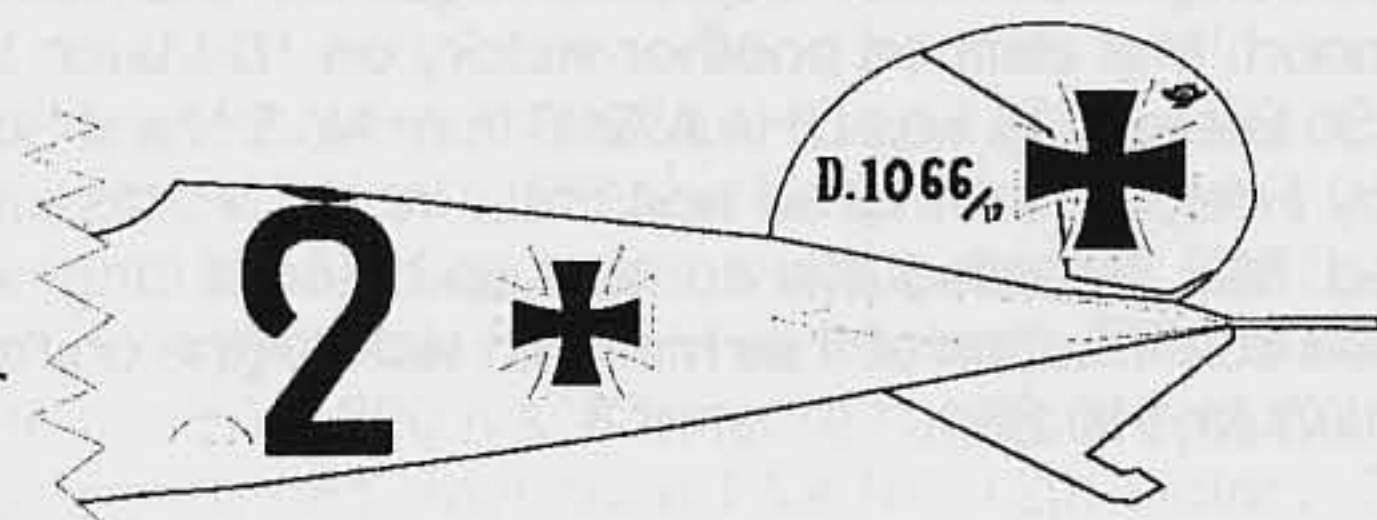


OO. - Albatros D.III serial unknown. Seen in a background shot the white 'N' could be a monogram for a pilot, possibly *Rudolf Nebel*. Another D.III, 1964/16 is supposed to have served with *Jasta 5*, but when photographed it was ex-works with an Axial propeller.

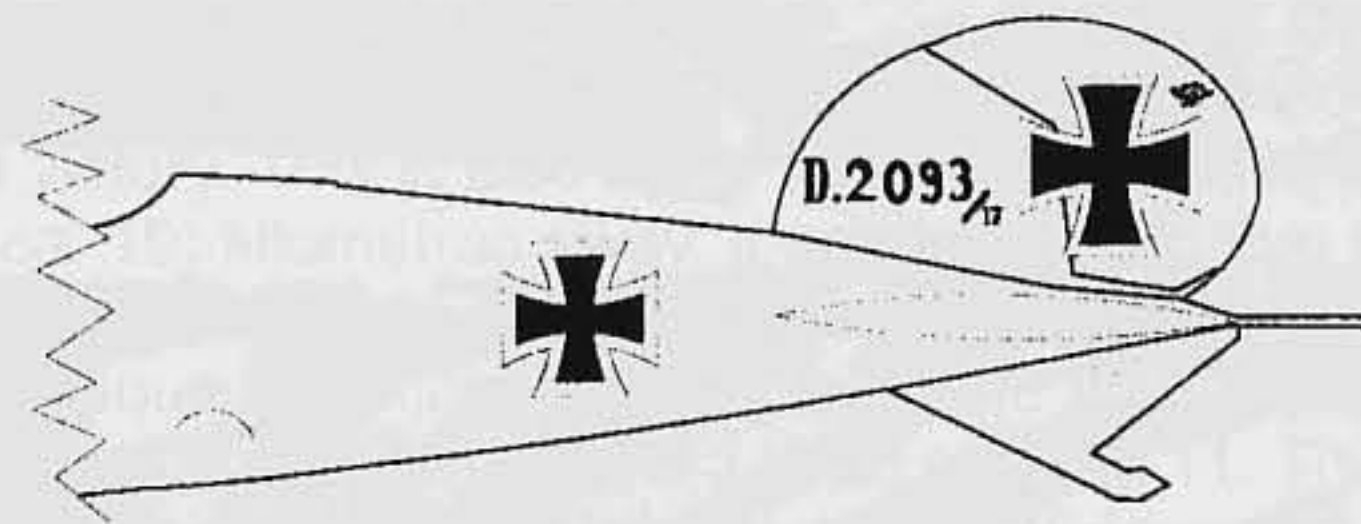


PP. - Albatros D.III serial unknown. This machine marked with a white '8' in unusual proportions was definitely flown by Nebel. Its fuselage was overpainted a solid colour.

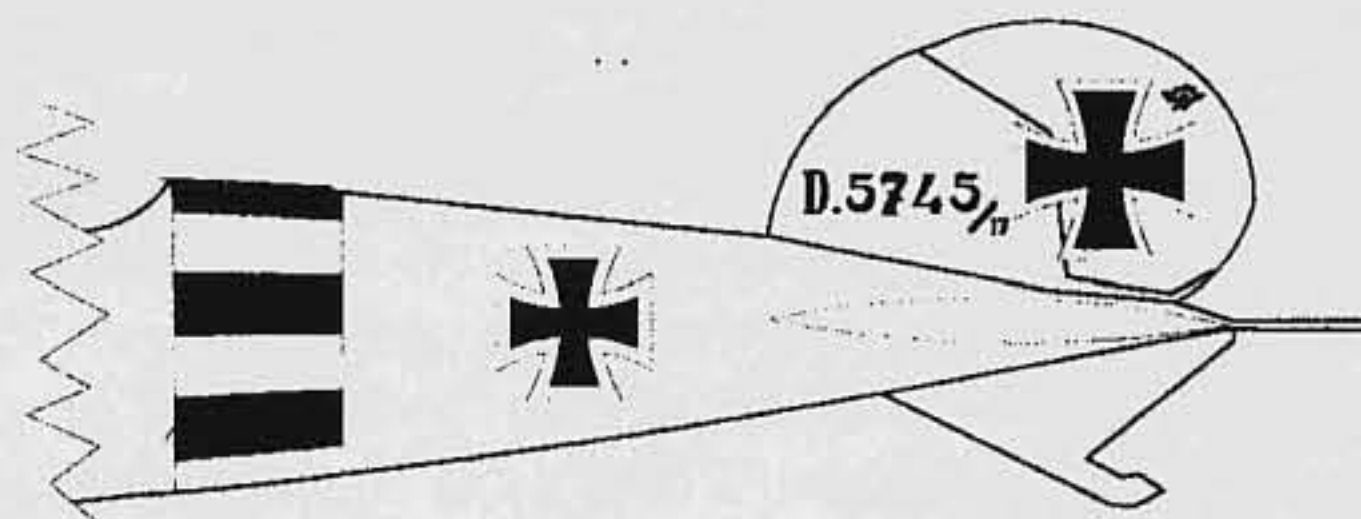
Drawings by the author



QQ. - Albatros D.V 1066/17. This was the aircraft in which Kurt Schneider received his fatal wound.



RR. - Albatros D.V 2093/17. This machine was the newly arrived and unmodified machine in the July 1917 line-up. We do not know what markings it may have received later.



SS. - Albatros D.Va 5745/17. This machine with the black and white revolving fuselage band was at Boistrancourt on 17 March 1918 at the time of von Richthofen's visit. That it did not have unit markings suggests that it had recently arrived at *Jasta 5*, possibly transferred from another unit to bolster *Jasta 5*'s strength for the forthcoming offensive.

the machine guns. Achieving this would certainly have been possible with the technology of the time, but maintaining the weapons and their synchronisation would have been a real headache. In all probability they were removed after a very brief trial period and their development not pursued. Because of the installation that must have been complex, it seems likely the aircraft were newly-issued especially for the purpose although they easily outlasted the experiment.

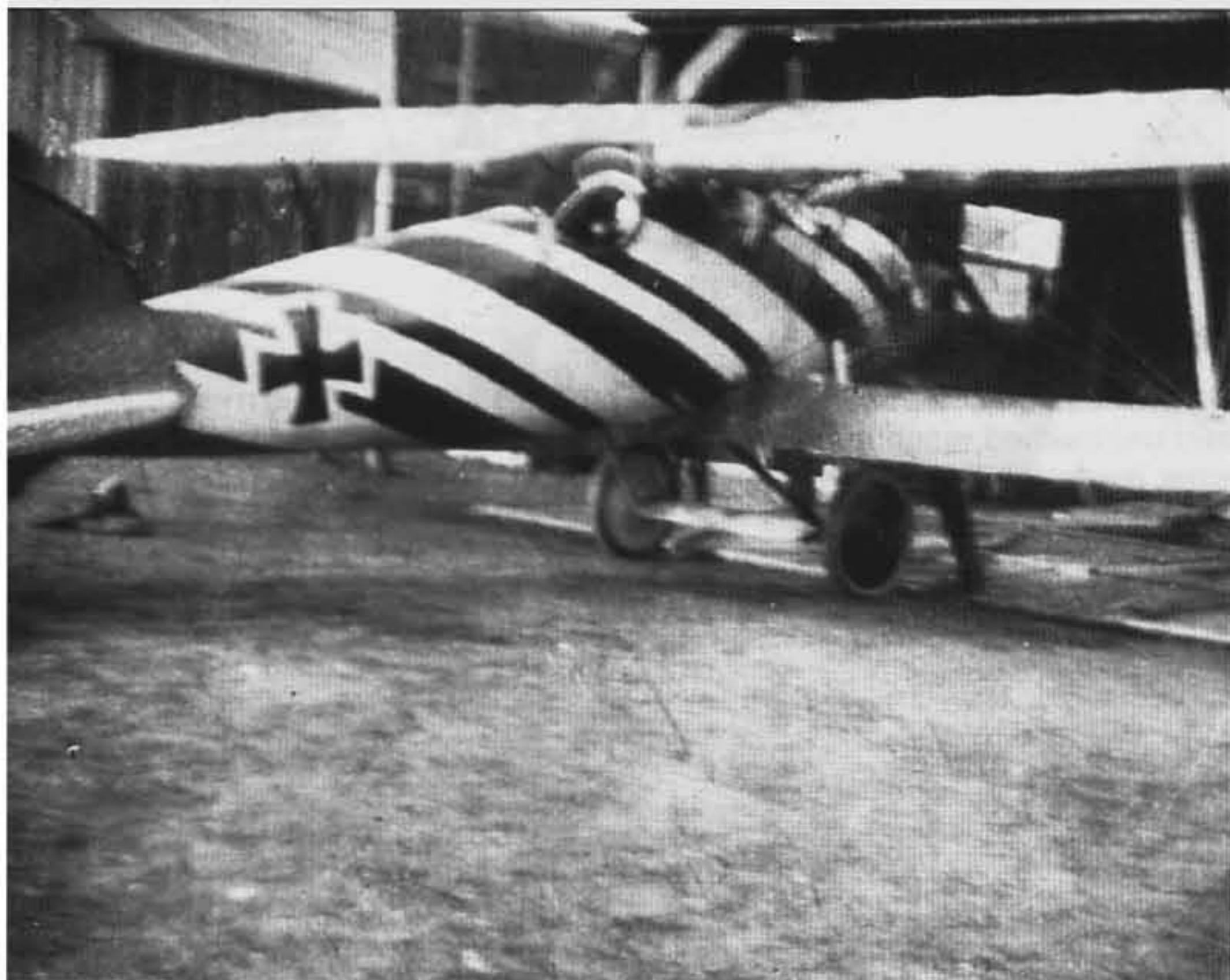
Although the spiral band machine with the bone lasted for a long time, the best information about Rumey's aircraft comes from a photograph taken on 17 March 1918 from the tower to record the visit by von Richthofen, and perhaps most remarkably there is a cluster of persons around the tail of one of the two triplanes there similar to the famous one of von Richthofen talking with Flashar as von Hippel looked on. It is so similar, in fact, that one is tempted to conclude that they were taken within moments of one another. This photograph is important for several reasons, not the least being that it shows two aircraft marked with spiral bands, both certainly being the 'property' of Fritz Rumey. One had bands in differing proportions and is well known. The other is known only from this photograph and had a wonderfully tapering set of black and white bands that clearly took a great deal of planning. Before the unit had moved from Boistrancourt, Rumey would have his famous wide - and narrow-banded aircraft photographed and still later the bone-bearing machine would reappear (or possibly be recreated), so that we can document at least three, possibly four, 'wound ribbon'-marked machines he flew: equal proportions with bone, possibly a similar one without bone, tapering proportions, and two sets of proportions, not necessarily in that order.

The next major diary entry for *Jasta 5* was a day of trauma on 17 February 1918. *Ltn.* Schlömer was wounded in the foot, Rumey was shot down and his machine burned as related above, and von Hippel landed to give first aid to Schlömer. After doing so his motor failed on take-off and he made a successful dead stick landing. From their *Kette* of four aircraft only one returned to Boistrancourt without incident. In spite of these failings there was one very positive note; *Oblt.* Flashar received his *Hohenzollern* for long and distinguished service.

18 February, was a day of miracles and losses. Von Hippel was flying his 'reserve' machine, Flashar's old dragon-marked 2065/17. The reason for this is not known; it may have been that his regular mount was being checked after the preceding day's motor failure or it may be that he ended up prancing it at Boistrancourt. It was to be the old D.V he was flying this day rather than a newer D.Va and that fact saved his life. Arguably a newer machine might not have shed its port lower wing as von Hippel's

did, and we know that 2065 had been flying for at least seven months, nevertheless, if we interpret events correctly a newer machine met the same fate in the same action. Von Hippel was in combat at 5000 m over 'Folie Ferme' (there is a 'La Grande Folie Ferme' and a 'La Petite Folie Ferme' that are adjacent and it could have been either) with three or four 'Sopwiths'. Given the penchant for misidentification, we can only be reasonably sure that these were British single-seaters. They were not SE5as of No.56 Squadron as often stated, but without hard evidence we cannot rule out that they may have been SE5as from some other unit. In any case, von Hippel made a sudden move and his port lower wing twisted free and fell away, later found 20 km from his landing spot. Because the D.V shared the weakness of the single lower wing spar with its brethren, but was alone among Albatros 'Vee-strutters' in having the aileron control cables run through the upper wing instead of the lower, von Hippel was able to retain a modicum of control as he became effectively a biplane to starboard and a parasol monoplane to port. Controlling the descent that has been called 'flimsy' was no small task, but he was able to bring it down with some control. He somersaulted the machine on landing, but crawled out unhurt. During his descent von Richthofen and part of *JGI* had kept enemy fighters at bay, whilst the fuselage of *Vzfw.* Martin Klein's Albatros shot by him, minus its wings, crashing near Beaurevoir. Klein was already dead, shot through the head, but the violence of his death convulsion and abrupt movement of the controls caused the wings to peel either then or during the precipitous dive. For many years it has been assumed that Klein was McCudden's victim and that is now known to be incorrect. For years it has also been thought that the Albatros Klein was flying was the same machine flown the previous summer by Dilcher, grey fuselage with green band and yellow star because both von Hippel and Mai identify his marking as a 'star'. We have Mai and Dilcher's album to thank for the Dilcher identification. There is no evidence that the star-marked machine was with *Jasta 5* in January-early February 1918. True, that is negative proof, but there is positive evidence of another machine that could well have been the one flown by Klein. It shows in the background of a photo of their LVG 'hack' and was an OAW-built D.Va marked with a *Komet*, apparently in red, yellow, and white. Ferko had written 'Klein' on the back of his photo of this aircraft and we think that is likely to have been true. Moreover the term 'Star/Stern' is fairly vague in English and German and could easily be expanded to mean 'Comet/Komet'. Thus the Albatros propensity to shed its lower wings when vigorously handled applied to younger as well as older airframes.

On 26 February Rumey claimed a victory at 1600 hrs. North of Busigny. His victim was DH4 A7697 from No.25 Squadron



▲ 75

75. Rumey's variably striped D.V, probably taken at the same time as the previous one. This perspective emphasises the 2-3-4-5 proportion of the stripes. The date of these two photos is not known, but is probably January or February 1918, showing that *Jasta 5* was still largely equipped with Albatros D.Vs instead of D.Vas.

crewed by Lts. G M Shaw and C H S Ackers who crash-landed their machine in a ploughed field. Both survived as PoW, both apparently wounded, at least Shaw was because Rumey visited him in hospital. On 27 February *Ltn. Gürke* and supposedly *Sgt. Buder* joined *Jasta 5*. However, Buder is seen in the photograph with *Engineer Kaendler* known to have been taken on 25 February, so, once again, these dates are imprecise. Of the latter this is the only record, that he entered the unit this day and is not mentioned again. Perhaps this is the same *Sgt. Buder* who served later in *Jasta 84*? Of *Gürke* a little more is known, although his career would be brief as a fighter pilot, a mere 11 days. Apparently *Wilhelm Gürke* was fresh out of *Jastaschule* when he joined *Jasta 5*, but it is clear he had seen action, because he was a highly-decorated soldier. Whether these decorations came from ground or air combat is not known, but it was most likely the latter because no less a personage than *Manfred von Richthofen* came to his funeral. *Von Richthofen* was a frequent visitor to *Boistrancourt* and had apparently known *Gürke* in some earlier role, most probably in two-seaters. That *Gürke* had considerable 'clout' is also demonstrated by the elaborate markings his D.Va received at *Jasta 5* for the short time he was there. The photograph shows the proud pilot posing beside a D.Va whose fuselage, tail unit, struts, and wheels are all overpainted and the fuselage bears a white pentagram as a personal marking. A Propulsor propeller was fitted to this machine. The wings were covered with lozenge fabric and there were white 'G's under both lower wings in classic style. The tail unit is in normal *Jasta 5* colouration. The problems in colour identification relate mostly to that very dark fuselage, wheels and struts - they almost certainly were red or black. In this particular case the edging of the tail unit shows little contrast with the fuselage so, unlike *Bäumer's* aircraft, that provides little evidence. On the other hand the fuselage colour and the black of the crosses also show little if any contrast and so red and black would appear to remain equally likely. We have chosen red for three reasons. First, this pilot was well respected and could get practically any decor he wanted, and red sounds flamboyant enough. Second, with *Bäumer's* earlier and *Lehmann's* current, machines, *Jasta 5* had a distinct precedent to use a lot of red paint on the fuselages of their aircraft, but none that we know of for extensive black. Finally, there is the spinner that we think is distinctly too light to have been red in the usual *Jasta* practice. It easily could have been green, however, and that would make a very logical distinction to have a green tail, a red fuselage, and a green spinner.

Flying activity increased with the beginning of March, although the northern European spring can have treacherously cold weather. There were some inconclusive scraps early in the month, *Ltn. Oppenhorst* returned from leave on the 7th and *Mai* claimed a victory on the 8th. He recorded this as a *Breguet *14* at 1211 hrs. South of *Montbréhain* (or Northwest of *Fresnoy-le-Grand*) down in flames, actually this was *DH4, B2094*, from *No.27 Squadron*. The crew 2/Lt. J F R I Perkins and Lt. R G Foley, MC both killed. On 10 March, *Ltn. Gürke* was shot down in flames at *Honnescourt-sur-Escaut*. His funeral was at *Boistrancourt* on the 13th and was attended not only by *von Richthofen*, but also by *Major Hänelt* from *Idflieg*. *Gürke's* body was shipped to his home in *Wiesbaden* for burial. Between *Gürke's* death and burial, *von Hippel* had a 'light crash' of *D.Va 6530/17* on the 12th. This followed an inconclusive scrap with *No.27 Squadron* again on the 11th during the afternoon. *Mai* claimed another victory on 16 March at 1110 hrs. over *St. Benin*. This was *DH4 A7908* from *No.5 Naval Squadron* crewed by *Fcdr. L W Omerod* and *FSL. W H L Pattisson DFC*, both killed. *Mai* recorded this combat as being a long one and he received confirmation of it as his ninth victory (the unit's 140th) in *Kogenluft Nr.119.661*.

The *Rittmeister* comes to call and mobility follows

Photographs document that *Rittmeister Manfred von Richthofen* was a frequent visitor to *Boistrancourt*. That is not surprising given the nearness of *Jasta 5* to *JG I* and its elite status. On 17 March, however, he came to pay his respects and a good deal more. He brought with him the message that would dramatically alter the unit's history. In effect; Germany will start the huge push on 21 March that should win the war and *Jasta 5* was placed under operational control of *JG I* (and *von Richthofen*) to participate; it would be necessary for *Flashar's* unit to prepare to move out of their 'cushy' digs at *Boistrancourt* and displace to the *Somme Valley*, although they could remain where they were temporarily until the course of the battle was made clear. Evidently, spirits ran high and several officers photographed this day were jubilant about their prospects for victory. Even *von Richthofen* seems to have been caught up in the enthusiasm. It is known that quite early in the war he was convinced that its outcome must inevitably be a German defeat. The hope that *Operation Michael* offered to snatch victory for Germany at what was approaching the last minute may even have caught him up in the euphoria. Several photographs were taken of *von Richthofen*, *Flashar*, *von Hippel* and others around the triplanes that *von Richthofen* and *von Linsingen* had flown over to *Boistrancourt*. These photographs are valuable for several reasons. Also as mentioned previously, at very nearly the exact moment that the photographer snapped the group from behind one of the triplanes, another photographer from the tower captured the panorama of the field. From the tower we see a line-up of seven aircraft, the nearest is mostly masked by tree branches. It was a D.V with a dark (red?) fuselage band. The next is *Cremer's OAW-built D.Va* with the triple chevron, followed by a D.Va with a very dark fuselage and wheels. The fourth is *Lehmann's Edelweiss-marked D.V* and the fifth is probably *Flashar's 'Fausf' D.Va*. Six and seven are two of *Rumey's* aircraft, both D.Vs it appears, the first with tapering revolving bands and a probable *Axial* propeller, and the second with the complex, varying proportioned revolving bands and a probable *Eta* propeller. Behind these and nearer the hangars is *Mai's* star and crescent machine with its nose panels removed. There appears to be an *Albatros* in hangar number 4, based on other photos it had a wide white band with narrow black edges and there's a *Pfalz D.IIIa* in hangar number 5. This last machine is intriguing based upon what we can see and what we cannot. It bears the figure of an animal rearing in a light colour on a very dark fuselage. The first guess is that this is another *Braunschweiger Ross* white or more likely *Silbergrau*, on red, and indeed may be, but the figure could be that of some other animal. For example, we have no record of when *Wolf* left the unit and there is that history to recall as well as the possibility that the animal was a lion or even a chimerical beast. Separated from the line-up of seven machines, but more or less in line with them, is another group beginning with an apparently ex-works *Albatros*, then *JG I Fokkers 163/17-525/17*. Next is an *Albatros*

D.Va 5745/17 with a black and white fuselage band usually cropped from photographs. It did not have the *Jasta* 5 fuselage or tail colours nor did the three additional Albatros fighters completing the line-up. It is possible, of course, that these were not *Jasta* 5 aircraft and that they might also have belonged to *JG* 1. That seems unlikely and it seems equally unlikely that von Richthofen would have needed to travel with so large a retinue. They were newly-transferred to the unit and had not yet received their *Jasta* markings, although some like 5745/17 might have previously served in other units and that they had just been assigned to *Jasta* 5 to bring them up to strength for the forthcoming offensive. As momentous as this day was, air operations did not cease, indeed they intensified. The British were well aware of the impending German attack and committed as many aircraft as possible. The Germans were equally determined to prevent as much aerial observation as they could and thereby retain as much surprise as possible. On 17 March, Rumey downed an SE5a at 1025 hrs. over Marcoing. The pilot was 2/Lt. J F T Barrett from No.64 Squadron whose aircraft (B673 'A') was severely damaged but he survived unhurt. This made Rumey a 'double ace'. At 1320 hrs. Könnecke flamed a Spad XIII (B6843) over Graincourt-lès-Havrincourt for his 12th victory. The pilot, 2/Lt. T G Shaw from No.23 Squadron, was killed. There is a conflict in claims here, Franks, *et al.*, say his victim was a DH4 and Shaw fell at 1630 hrs. to a pilot from *Jasta* 42. The increased air activity related to the forthcoming German Spring Offensive was manifest again on 18 March with one of the biggest air battles of the war occurring over Le Cateau-Cambrésis. Just how many aircraft were involved is open to debate with each side claiming, as was normal, that they were outnumbered. One figure places the total involved as high as 140 aircraft from both sides. Mai's personal estimate was that there were 70 or 80. Even if that figure is somewhat high, it was a large action with losses to both sides; one reckoning says that eight British and

three German aircraft fell. We do know that Fritz Oppenhorst was given credit for an SE5a at 1145 hrs. at Escaufourt for his second victory. This is also listed as being at Awoingt, which is many (ca. 19) kilometres away. It seems certain that the victim here was Jimmy McCudden's brother, 2/Lt. J A McCudden MC, of No.84 Squadron killed at this place and time. Credit for this victory was also given to *Ltn.* H J Wolff of *Jasta* 11. The weather turned for the worse during the next several days and air action was limited.

Operation Michael - almost the last throw of the dice

Germany would manage offensives later in 1918, but they were last-gasp efforts, however, *Operation Michael* had real hope of success. With the peace treaty with Russia, Germany had been able to redeploy large military resources from the Eastern Front to the Western. This advantage in men and *matériel* would only be temporary, however, and Germany must use them to achieve a decisive victory before the flood of American troops and equipment that would pour into Europe later in 1918 and tip the balance irrevocably in favour of the Allies. Thus on 21 March 1918 an attack of almost unprecedented proportions fell on the British Third and Fifth Armies with its *Schwerpunkt* south of the Somme. The German Second, 17th, and 18th Armies were committed, totalling 71 divisions and almost 6000 guns against 28 British divisions, many of them understrength, and 2600 guns. Weather was mostly foggy and the cover aided the German advance. Within two weeks the attack advanced more than 50 km in some areas and the British front had been successively withdrawn, but came very close to total collapse. Finally, the advance ground to a halt and the single biggest reason for the British success in stopping the German advance had been through use of air power. One can argue, in fact, that this was the first major ground action in history whose outcome was decided by such power. The initial German air superiority was challenged and overcome by the British who used all sorts of aircraft, especially Camel units, in the role of ground attack. It was this constant hammering from the air that led to ultimate German defeat.

Könnecke and Rumey both scored victories on 23 March,

76. Inspection of *Jasta* 5 by General von Hoeppner, 4 March 1918. Könnecke and Mai are fourth and fifth from the right, Flashar is behind the general and von Hippel is nearly facing the camera well down the line.

▼ 76





▲ 77

77. When the *Rittmeister* visited *Jasta 5* on 17 March 1917 he flew this Dr.I Triplane 525/17 (w/n 2193). It carries the black and white striped tail and black cowling markings of its unit, *Jasta 6*, and overpainted wing tip leading edges - colours unknown. Alongside is Albatros D.V D.5745/17 and inside hangar no.5 beyond is the colourful, and as yet sadly unidentified, Pfalz D.IIIa with the heraldic markings on the fuselage.

Könnecke's 13th and Rumey's 11th. There was a scoring race now in effect between these pilots that would gradually shift in Rumey's direction, but would last for many weeks as their scores remained very close. Könnecke claimed a Bristol F2b, listed at 0935 hrs. at Herville. Assuming the identification was correct, not always a safe assumption, but *Jasta 5* had their own 'tame' Bristol so they were very familiar with the type, there are a couple of possible candidates for Könnecke's claim. Bristol F2b B1171 from No.22 was lost in the Cambrai sector with its pilot Capt. P Thompson being killed and 2/Lt. D W Kent-Jones made PoW. Also lost by No.22 Squadron this day was C4827 with 2/Lt. H L Christie and Lt. N T Berrington who were unhurt. One of these was almost certainly Könnecke's victim. Rumey's was Sopwith Dolphin C3905 from No.79 Squadron flown by 2/Lt. A F G Clarke, PoW at Cartigny. Mai also claimed this but it was disallowed. The following day Rumey and Könnecke each claimed an RE8. Rumey's is tentatively identified as B5061 from No.53 Squadron both crewmen, Capt. R H Martin and 2/Lt. G H Parker, being killed in the action. Another No.53 Squadron RE8 was lost this day and its crew of 2/Lts. A A Miles and C W Cook made PoW at Cartigny. This is quite likely Könnecke's victim. Mai had an inconclusive encounter with another RE8 and it should be noted that, in addition to their two losses, No.53 Squadron had another crewman wounded this day. Perhaps Mai had some success after all?

The next day the move finally came, the pace of the German advance necessitating relocation of air units to be near their

operational areas. For *Jasta 5* that meant a leap to the Southwest of about 35 km to Liéramont. The airfield was probably North-east of the town and had been occupied by a British unit only two days before. This move and the change of quarters must have come as something of a jolt. After Boistrancourt, Liéramont must have been something of a letdown. Here the men were housed in British Nissen huts and their aircraft in seven Bessonneau hangars. Granted it was assumed to only be a temporary arrangement as the German advance surged forward toward final victory, and granted the men of *Jasta 5* must have felt strong patriotism to have been part of this momentous operation, still it seems certain that they must have missed their once sumptuous accommodations.

Jasta 5 was in action almost immediately. Mai recorded two more unsuccessful combats with RE8s on 26 March (perhaps this was a Bristol F2b?) and 27 showing that the unit was in combat the day after their arrival at Liéramont. On 28 March Rumey scored again, this time over a Sopwith Camel. According to Henshaw, this was C8297 of No.43 Squadron, 2/Lt. H T Adams being killed at 0910 hrs. over Dernancourt. Another source suggests this was a Camel from No.4 Squadron AFC, B2395, piloted by Lt. C M Freez downed near Bray-sur-Somme. In Henshaw's book the last name was properly spelled 'Feez' and he attributed the victory to *Ltn.* Paul Billick. The fact that German sources say the *Jasta 5* victim was made PoW rather than killed, adds some support to the Freez/Feez theory. Mai also claimed this victim, but it was awarded to Rumey. This was Rumey's 13th, placing him only one behind Könnecke. On this day *Vzfw.* Kurt Kressner joined the unit and the following day *Ltn.* Schlömer received the Iron Cross, first class.

Bad weather hampered air operations for the remainder of March as the German advance began to be contained. The critical period for the British was nearly over and more normal air operations resumed with their aircraft less engaged in ground attack. On 1 April, the day of the birth of the Royal Air Force, Könnecke scored again, this time over an SE5a. Once again,

there is some uncertainty about the victim. According to Henshaw it was C5433 from No.56 Squadron downed at Fricourt and claimed at Albert (both certainly within the patrol area of *Jasta 5*) at 1245 hrs., Lt. F Beaumont made PoW. The same source attributes the victory to a Fokker Dr.I, but *Jasta 5* was still entirely Albatros-equipped at this time. Employing German sources, the late A E Ferko listed Könnecke's victim as 2/Lt. F(S.?)H Winkley from No.84 Squadron who was killed in SE5a B174 near Amiens at 1630 hrs. Henshaw credits *Ltn. J J Wolff* of *Jasta 11*, but the location is certainly within reach of a patrol starting from Liéramont. On balance, however, it seems more likely that Beaumont was Könnecke's victim on April Fool's Day and that there was a confusion in aircraft types because triplanes from *JG I* were certainly operating in the area. Once again Mai also claimed this victim, but was denied. Mai's bad luck in receiving confirmation continued on 5 April when he claimed another Camel, this one being awarded to a *Ltn. Döhnig*. There may be confusion because there is a record that he was in combat with another Camel (C8248 from No.43 Squadron, piloted by Lt. T R V Hill, wounded and made PoW), that his claim was not allowed and was credited to *Ltn. Delling* of *Jasta 34* instead. According to Henshaw, however, on this disastrous day No.43 Squadron lost five Camels, all to members of *Jasta 11*, Hill being the victim of Hans Weiss. Once again, on 12 April, Mai is supposed to have forced down a DH4 near Corbie, but it was not confirmed as a victory. On 11 April, Könnecke had scored again, at 1715 hrs. over an SE5a at Bucquoy. He was credited with this as apparently also was *Ltn. Böning* of *Jasta 76*. The victim was Capt. K Crawford, killed in SE5a C5445 from No.60 Squadron.

The following day, 12 April, was a busy one. Könnecke claimed an SE5a north of Albert at 1815 hrs. that was confirmed and Rumey claimed one in the same action that was not. He then proceeded to attack a Sopwith Dolphin in the same area at 1900 hrs. This victory was confirmed. Könnecke's victim is uncertain because times and places of British SE5a losses do not coincide with Könnecke's claim. If anything, Rumey's situation

is worse because the British lost no Dolphins on this date and none remotely similar aircraft seems to fit time and place either. As a result we have two disallowed claims (Mai's and Rumey's first) and two confirmed that cannot be identified (Könnecke's and Rumey's second). One can only speculate about the long-term effect these disallowed claims had for Josef Mai. They certainly helped ensure that would be the junior man in terms of scoring within the 'Golden Triumvirate'. It is also likely that they prevented him from following his two colleagues in becoming commissioned (he was, but significantly later) and parlaying officer status plus a final victory total of 30 to earn the *Pour le Mérite*. With 30 victories by war's end he certainly was eligible and he was, in fact, on the list to receive it when the war ended and such decorations ceased. Just a couple more victories this early, and reaching 20 before the bar started to be raised to 30, would probably have caused him to receive the award before the Armistice.

On 17 April *Jasta 5* moved again, this time to Cappy. This was another South-westerly relocation of about 35 km and showed how the German offensive had grabbed a large amount of territory. The aerodrome was one of the most advanced that the Germans would occupy during the course of the war. It was in a large open area Southeast of town and probably included the present-day soccer field. Once again, and for what was to be the norm for the remainder of the war, the aircraft of *Jasta 5* were under canvas and the men in huts. This move put them on the same airfield with units of *JG I* and *Jasta 46* and not only under the

78. Everyone is convinced that this is a photo of Manfred von Richthofen seated in the cockpit of an ex-*Jasta 4* (or *Jasta 10*?) Albatros D.V (with lozenge fabric on the wings) visiting Boistrancourt on 13 March 1918. Perhaps, but the tail marking looks suspiciously like a green tail with a red edge, and the spinner could be either red or black - it looks remarkably similar to the *Jasta 5* Albatros behind it. Whatever the truth, the bench, table, and megaphone on Stand 3 behind show nicely.



GUIDE TO VOLUME 2 COLOUR IMAGES

FRONT COVER:

Donner und blitzen!

Groundcrew and livestock scatter as Hans von Hippel misjudges a landing leading to an eventual *Kopfstand!* Such an occurrence was not uncommon...

(Painting by Robert Karr)

INSIDE FRONT COVER:

33). Albatros D.Va, serial unknown, flown by Rudolf Matthaei in December 1917 and also by Hans Schlömer in January-February 1918.

34). Albatros D.V serial unknown, flown by Richard Dilcher, May-June 1917. Uppersurfaces of fuselage mottled in dull colours as shown.

35). Albatros D.V, serial unknown, flown by Fritz Oppenhorst, May 1918. Fuselage and tail markings changed to *Balkenkreuze* configuration.

PAGE 21:

36). Albatros D.V, serial unknown, flown by Richard Flashar, April-May 1918. Grey-painted fuselage bears the well-known *gepanzerte Faust* marking in black and white.

PAGE 22:

37). Albatros D.Va 5284/17, flown by Josef Mai, November 1917-April 1918. Upper portion of rear fuselage overpainted in a mottle of dull colours as shown.

38). Albatros D.Va 5284/17 as flown by Josef Mai, April-May 1918. The fuselage has been overpainted in grey, and the original crescent changed to a Man-in-the-Moon motif. Late-war national insignia also applied.

38A). Uppersurface detail showing the distinctive 'goal-post' marking in the unit green.

PAGE 23:

39, 39A and 39B). Albatros D.Va, possibly 7037/17, flown by Hans von Hippel in February 1918. This was likely Hippel's second 'Blitz', the first being shown on the outside rear cover where, it may be noted, the lightning marking is somewhat thicker.

PAGE 24:

40). Albatros D.V, likely to have been 4629/17, as flown by Hans von Hippel in March (?) 1918. This D.V, followed the previous D.Vas flown by von Hippel and was probably his third 'Blitz'.

41). Albatros D.Va 6550/17 (?) flown by Hans von Hippel in May (?) 1918 showing a markedly different 'Blitz' marking on the varnished ply fuselage. Late style insignia also appears.

42). Albatros D.Va (OAW) 6067/17 flown by Jupp Cremer, March-May 1918.

PAGE 29:

43). Pfalz D.III 4185/17, pilot and serial unknown, was probably a visitor to Boistancourt in early 1918 along with a diamond-marked Albatros - see 60.

44). Albatros D.III (OAW), flown by Waldemar Christiansen, serial, time and place unknown. Colour of fuselage overpainting not known, but unit green is a likely candidate.

45). Albatros D.III (OAW), serial unknown, flown by Jupp Cremer, Autumn(?), 1917.

PAGE 30:

46). Pfalz D.IIIa, serial and pilot unknown, March 1918. Because the rearing horse? (a conjectural reconstruction), was painted near the original fuselage cross, the latter was re-marked aft of the normal position. It is likely it had a white surround in contrast with the rudder cross, the outline of which was probably left in the original *Silbergrau*.

47). LVG C.V 9474/16, flown by several *Jasta* 5 pilots during early to mid-1918. The fuselage bore white encircling band, partial band and numeral 6 that showed through the green overpainting.

48). Bristol F.2b, originally A7321, captured and flown by *Jasta* 5 pilots from September 1917 until May (?) 1918. For details of wing markings, see photo 66 on page 3.

PAGE 31:

49). Fokker Dr.I 139/17, ex-*Jasta* 11, flown by Josef Mai, May 1918. Original turtledeck and fuselage discs, white vertical and horizontal stripes overpainted (probably in Fokker green). Cross backgrounds also altered using the same paint. Rear fuselage and tail unit probably *Jasta* green.

50). Fokker Dr.I 588/17 (?), ex-*Jasta* 6 and Ludwig Beckmann, flown by *Jasta* 5 pilots, May-June 1918. This well-worn Fokker shows evidence of at least three previous fuselage markings - colours of which are unknown. Rear fuselage and tail in unit green.

51). Fokker Dr.I 557/17 (or 558/17), ex-*Jasta* 6, flown by Fritz Rumey, June 1918. As with all ex-*Jasta* 6 triplanes, the original black/white tail stripes showed through the unit green overpainting (see 51A). Wing and fuselage crosses modified with Fokker green/olive paint. On this triplane, all wing leading edges and tips were overpainted - probably green above and the red below - see photos 93 and 94 on pages 42 and 43.

PAGE 32:

52). Fokker Dr.I, serial unknown, ex-*Jasta* 6, flown by Willi (Wilhelm?) Schuster, July 1918. Fuselage markings consisted of red/white/black bands in equal proportions with narrow white bordering.

53). Fokker Dr.I, serial unknown, ex-*Jasta* 6, possibly flown by Fritz Oppenhorst in June 1918.

54). Fokker Dr.I, serial unknown, ex-*Jasta* 6, another (?) flown by Fritz Oppenhorst in June 1918.

NB: style of cross conversion varied considerably as may be noted on these three well-known examples...

INSIDE BACK COVER:

55). Fokker D.VII (possibly OAW-built), serial unknown, flown by Richard Flashar as *Gruppenführer* of *Jagdgruppe* 2, summer 1918. The dark (black?) fuselage band bore the pilot's initial. *Certain aspects of this plate are provisional.*

56). Fokker D.VII (OAW), serial unknown, flown by Otto Schmidt, summer 1918. Fuselage, wing and tail crosses *probably* consistent with other early OAW-built D.VIIs. The fuselage was overpainted at some stage - probably in *Jasta* green. White chevrons on upper and lower wings. (56A) *Certain aspects of this plate are provisional.*

57). Fokker D.VII (OAW) 4589/18, flown by Josef Mai, October 1918. This well-known D.VII bore black/white stripes on fuselage and tailplane (57A). Wheel covers are printed fabric - not common practice.

58). Fokker D.VII (OAW), serial unknown, flown by Karl Treiber, autumn 1918.

58A). Alternative interpretation of fuselage initial. *Certain aspects of this plate are provisional.*

OUTSIDE BACK COVER:

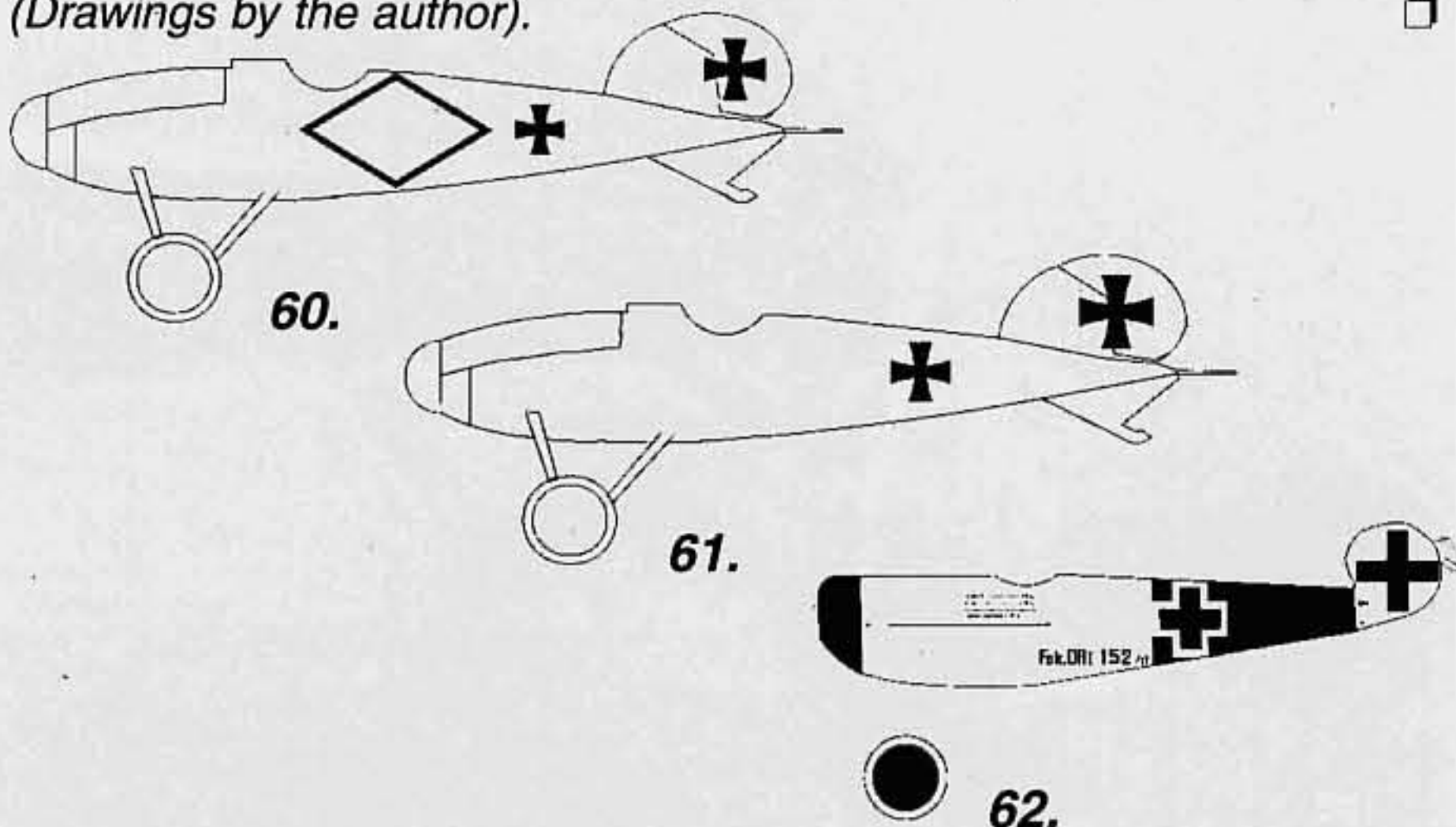
59, 59A and 59B). Albatros D.Va 5639/17, flown by Hans von Hippel, December 1917 - January 1918. With grey fuselage; wings covered in printed fabric and overpainted on uppersurfaces, under lower wing and both sides of the ailerons. This was von Hippel's first 'Blitz'.

All artwork by Robert Karr, Bob Pearson and Ray Rimell based on Glen Merrill research © Albatros Productions, Ltd., 2004.

60). Albatros D.V (D.Va?), serial, pilot and unit unknown, seen at Boistancourt, probably early 1918. Ex-works with fuselage diamond, resembling the orange and black-bordered markings of *Jasta* 30.

61). Albatros D.V, serial not known, flown by Kurt Rheinhold Schuhmann, June 1917. Ex-works aircraft with no unit markings visible.

62). Fokker Dr.I 152/17, ex-*Jasta* 11 (Manfred von Richthofen) flown by Josef Mai, June 1918. Rear fuselage and tail overpainted in unit green? (Drawings by the author). □



36). ALBATROS D.V, April-May 1918.



36A). PLAN VIEW.



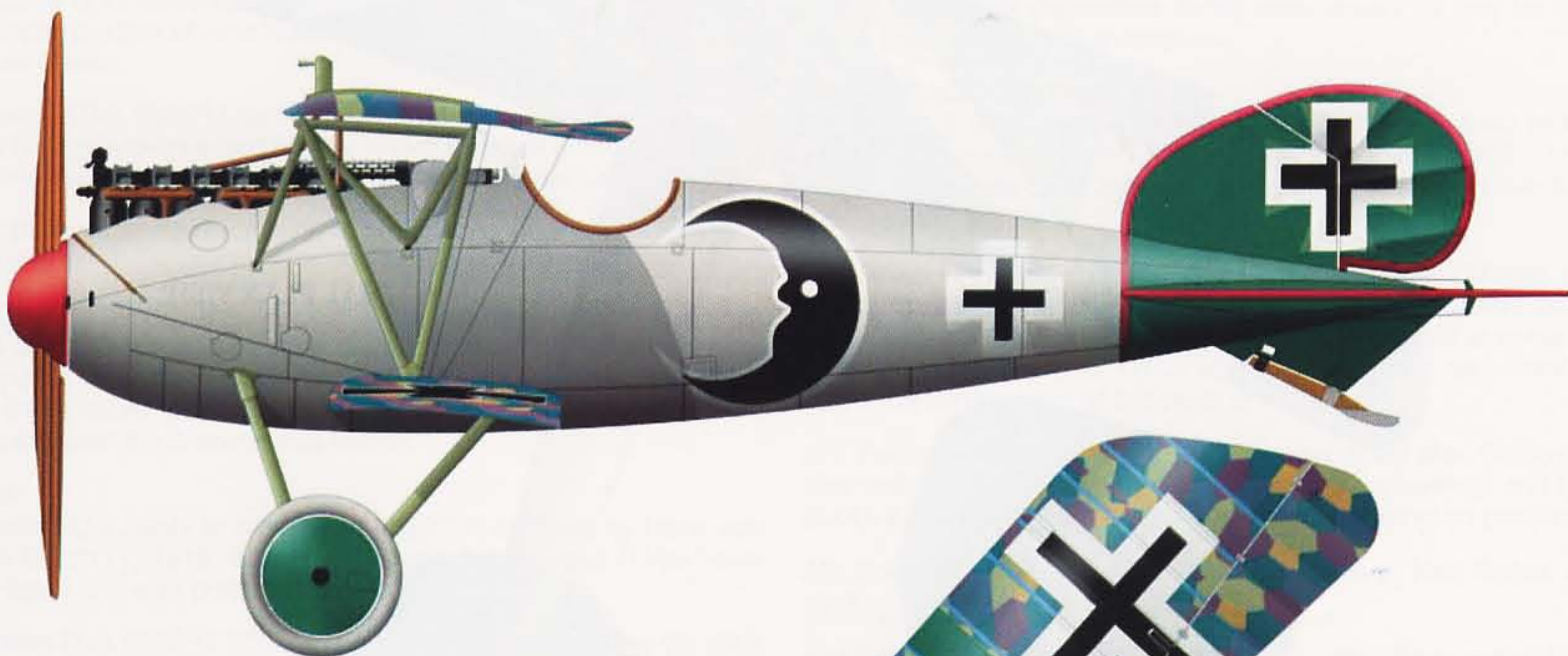
36B). UNDERSIDE VIEW



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37). ALBATROS D.Va 5284/17, 1917-1918.



38). ALBATROS D.V 5284/17.



38A). PLAN VIEW

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39). ALBATROS D.Va, 7037/17(?), Feb' 1918.



39A). PLAN VIEWS



39B). UNDERSIDE VIEW

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40). ALBATROS D.V 4629/17, March (?) 1918.



40A). LOWER WING DETAIL



41). ALBATROS D.Va 6550/17 (?) May (?) 1918.



41A). LOWER WING DETAIL



42). ALBATROS D.Va (OAW), 606-/17 March-May 1918.

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operational control of Manfred von Richthofen, but under his direct command. It was to prove to be a short-lived relationship. According to one source, *Jasta 5* did not fly again until 21 April, but according to Josef Mai's flight log they flew on 20 April and it was the 400th sortie for *Jasta 5*, clearly an important milestone. They engaged eight SE5as without any conclusion.

So much has been written about 21 April 1918 already that there is little to add. Flying with elements of *JG I*, pilots of *Jasta 5* were at least distant witnesses to the combat over the valley of the Somme in which Manfred von Richthofen was killed. They had their own hands full for, although they claimed no victories and sustained no losses, air combat between large numbers of aircraft was the order of the day, Mai estimated that 150-160 aircraft were involved. Although that figure is certainly too high, it is nevertheless true that action was intense and the *Kette* from *Jasta 5* was in the thick of it. One of the squadron histories merely says laconically that the *Kette* started at 1109 hrs. and returned at 1245 hrs., having encountered heavy aerial combat over Corbie. Hans von Hippel, flying D.Va 6530/17 on his 81st combat flight, was one of those distant witnesses to the *Rittmeister's* fall and says in his diary that, 'We observed Manfred von Richthofen in his red triplane in combat within the enemy lines. Richthofen, apparently through malfunctioning of his motor, landed within the enemy lines and from our observation, he was not attacked or shot down.' The debate about von Richthofen's death is as passionate as it is pointless, and distant observations in the heat of combat are certainly not reliable, although some could interpret this statement as suggesting there was no attacking British aircraft in the vicinity of von Richthofen when he fell. Whatever the cause, the loss of Germany's greatest air leader and most widely celebrated war hero was a terrible blow to the *Luftstreitkräfte*. In a word, von Richthofen was truly irreplaceable. His successors, Reinhard and Göring, were competent men and able to lead *JG I*, but neither they nor anyone else had the status to lead as many of Germany's air assets as von Richthofen. For *Operation Michael* he had under his command not only *JG I* composed of *Jastas 4, 6, 10, and 11*, but also *Jastas 3, 5, 16, 34, 37, 46, 54, and 56*. These 12 *Jagdstaffeln* would amass a strength of 150 fighter aircraft under a unified command. No other German pilot had the stature to be given such responsibility and probably none would command such an aerial armada for Germany until Adolf Galland was made chief of fighter operations in WWII. Although Germany was continuing to advance on the ground, the promise of the previous month that this series of offensives could win the war was now fading rapidly and the situation was beginning to take on an air of desperation. German aircrew would continue to fight with valour and determination right up to the end, but it was becoming obvious their sacrifices were only forestalling the inevitable. The ground offensives, intended originally to separate the British and French armies and drive through to the Channel ports, had failed in those objectives at high cost and were now being diverted toward an attack toward Paris; arguably an impossible task given the overall deterioration in strength and worsening supply situation that the Germans faced.

On 23 April, *Jasta 5* took off at 0658 hrs. and engaged Sopwith Dolphins without success or loss, returning to Cappy at 0837 hrs. On the 25th things improved for Mai as he was credited with a Sopwith Camel engaged over the lines at 1820 hrs. After a long '*Kurvenkampf*' it crashed near Dommartin. The pilot, Capt. S W Rosevear according to the Germans, and 2/Lt. M A Newnham according to the British, was either severely wounded and died of his wounds the same day (Germans) or unhurt (Henshaw). Further complicating matters, the Germans list the aircraft as B6231 from No.201 Squadron - that would be their first victory over a former naval aircraft now in the RAF. Henshaw, on the other hand, lists the aircraft as D1801 from No.65 Squadron. This conflict is difficult to resolve. The only mention that Henshaw makes of Rosevear was as a victorious Camel pilot in December 1917. Given that the Camel came down in German lines, one would lean in their direction as far as the identification and fate of the fallen pilot was concerned. To complicate matters still further, *The Camel File* also states the Camel was D1801 and piloted by an unhurt Newnham. It does list Rosevear and says

he died in this aircraft on this date in the morning when he failed to pull out of a dive firing at a ground target practising behind British lines. Whatever the identification, Mai was credited with his 10th victory and was now a 'double ace'. In a separate action, Vzfw. Kressner was credited with his first victory, an F2b over Marcelcave. The British lost only one Bristol Fighter on this date, the location being listed as 'Wiencourt'. (Wiencourt-l'Equipée is only three kilometres away). Its crew was Capt. T Colville-Jones PoW/DoW and 1/AM. F Finney (PoW) in B1126 from No.48 Squadron. Three days later Kressner would crash near the airfield on a test flight, breaking his leg. On 29 April, Lt. Lehmann was credited with an Armstrong-Whitworth north of Cachy (probably Sauchy-Cauchy again, but possibly La Cauchie) as his second victory. The British lost two FK8s this day, one from a shell hit and the other, B5789 from No.10 Squadron crewed by Lt. F W Burdick and probably AG C Liston, forced to land by an enemy aircraft, apparently behind British lines. This could be Lehmann's victim. If so it occurred at 1110 hrs. and the pilot, 2/Lt. R W Truebridge was wounded, dying days later of his wounds, although the observer 2/Lt. H Gittons was unhurt.

May 1918 began auspiciously for *Jasta 5*. There was little or no flying on the first, but the second was a busy day as their Albatros fighters tangled with Sopwith Camels from No.65 Squadron in the vicinity of Hamel. Both Rumey and Mai claimed victims and both were credited, although there are questions as usual. Mai states that his victim was 2/Lt. W H Duncan-Knight at 1415 hrs. at Morcourt. The Camel went down in flames killing the pilot and rendering the aircraft identification impossible. The serial was D6546 according to Henshaw who credits this victory to Rumey. At 1235 hrs. Camel C1100 'A' was shot down behind British lines and destroyed although the pilot, 2/Lt. P Whiteley, escaped unhurt. Rumey's claim was listed as west of Villiers Bretonneux. It seems likely that, regardless of who shot down who, both *Jasta 5* claims are probably legitimate. Later the same day pilots from *Jasta 5* took off at 1837 hrs. and engaged a large number of Breguet 14 aircraft, but without any success. This was the last flight for Josef Mai in venerable D.Va 5284/17.

***Jasta 5* Fokker Triplanes - A cacophony of colour**

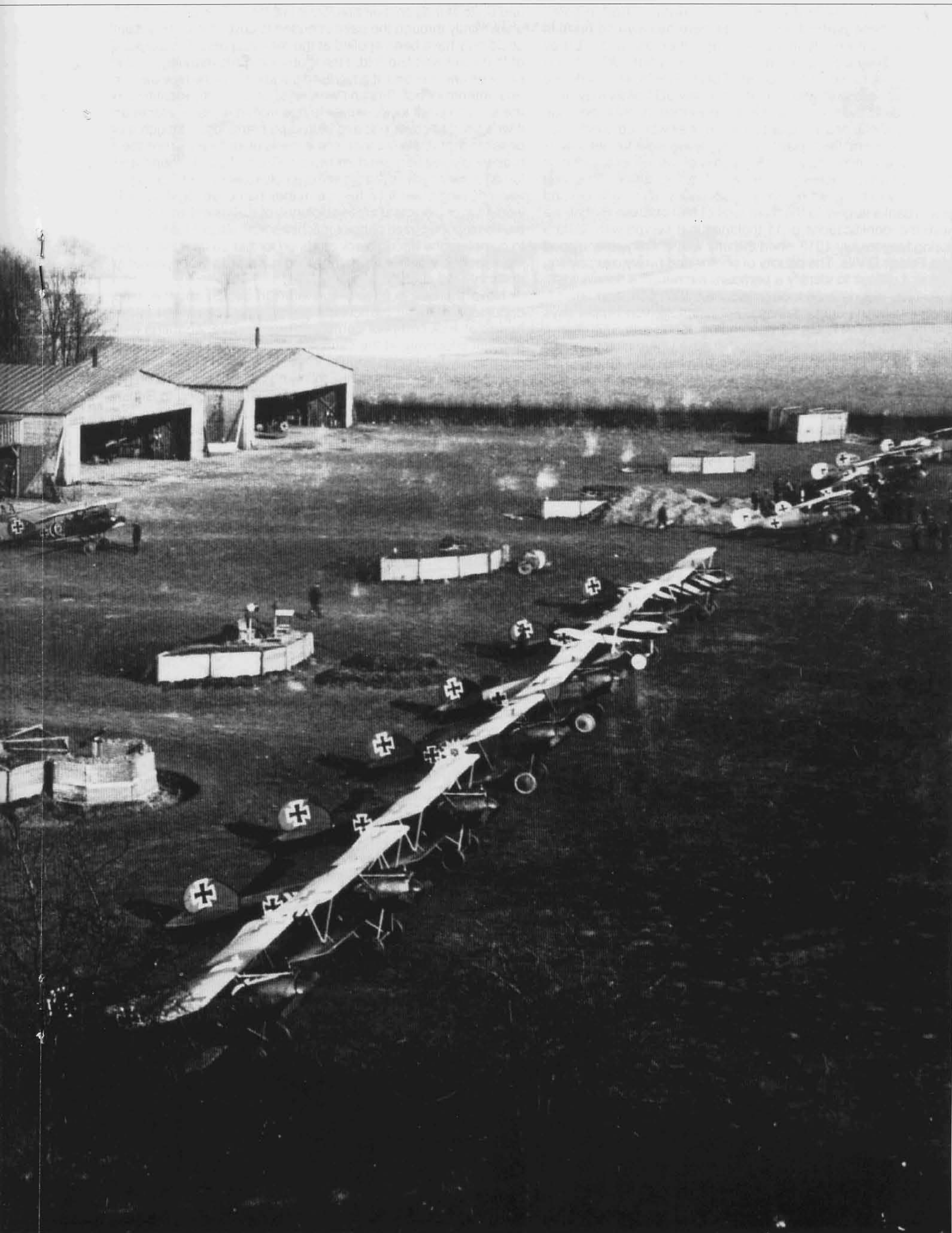
On 9 May, Rumey gained another victory, having encountered Breguets once again. His likely victim came from *Escadrille BR 107*, Breguet 14 1434 crewed by Mdl. Léon Génot and S/Lt. Jardin, both killed North of Villequier (Bailey and Cony list the former as WIA and the latter unhurt). This day was memorable for another reason. On 9 May, *Jasta 5* began to be re-equipped with Fokker triplanes. This is not quite as wonderful as it might seem. It is true that *Jasta 5* was getting rid of some pretty old Albatros fighters, but they were not getting great prizes in tri-

CENTRESPREAD PANORAMA

79. This image was taken during a visit by von Richthofen when several famous photographs were taken of him with *Jasta 5* personnel. One especially has him chatting with Flashar and others across the fuselage of one of the Fokker triplanes that he and von Linsingen flew over from *JG I* that day, 17 March 1918. In fact, that cluster of people is visible in the distance in this photograph that had to have been taken from the tower within seconds of the famous one. Line-up: first, a D.V with grey fuselage mostly masked by trees; second, Cremer's OAW-built D.Va with chevrons and green wheels; third, a D.Va with very dark (red?) fuselage with no apparent marking; fourth, Lehmann's D.V with *Edelweiss*, green wheels and struts, grey forward fuselage; fifth, a D.Va with a white chevron on the upper wing (=Flashar?), the wing masks the fuselage marking; sixth, Rumey's tapering band machine; seventh, Rumey's variably banded machine, both apparently D.Vs. Then there is a space and within it, near hangar number 3 is Mai's star and crescent machine. On the other side of the space is an apparently ex-works Albatros D.V or Va; then the two *JG I* triplanes, the second with von Richthofen and others; then Albatros D.Va 5745/17; and two more apparently ex-works Albatros fighters, probably D.Vas. These four machines surrounding the triplanes were probably newly-arrived in preparation for *Operation Michael*. Hiding in hangar number 5 is that lovely but enigmatic Pfalz D.IIIa and there is an Albatros in hangar number 4. From other photos the latter was known to have borne a broad white fuselage band with narrow black edges.

17 March 1917 - a visit from the *Rittmeister*...





planes for, in spite of the lofty reputation they had in some quarters, these particular machines were heavily-used and in some cases probably in worse shape than the aircraft they replaced. They were a mixed bag of cast-offs from *JG I*, *Jastas* 11 and 6, as those units received Fokker D.VIIs and made the Dr.Is locally available and redundant. A few *JG I* pilots may have been fond of Fokker's quirky little three-winged machine because it was highly manoeuvrable, but the pace of air war had accelerated considerably and the triplane was simply too slow for aerial warfare as it was evolving in 1918. Photos of these triplanes show them generally worse for wear, tired-looking, and overpainted repeatedly to the point of being a cacophony of colours, old and new. Thanks largely to the flight logs of Mai and von Hippel, we have the identifications of 11 triplanes that served with *Jasta* 5 during May to July 1918 when the unit was entirely re-equipped with Fokker D.VIIs. The paucity of photos and heavy overpainting makes it difficult to identify a particular aircraft. The serials were: 139, 152, 168, 172, 554, 557, 558, 567, 577, 588, and 592/17. Even this list has uncertainties. For example, von Hippel says that he flew 557/17, but he was photographed with 577/17 (w/n 2247). Did he fly *both* or is this another case where he transposed or erroneously repeated digits as we know he did with the unit's LVG and suspect he did with some of his Albatros fighters? Almost certainly *Jasta* 5 received these machines not because of their distinguished combat record, but rather because of geography - they shared an airfield with *JG I* so that the transfer involved no more than rolling them from one hangar to another.

I have read that *Jasta* 5 did not apply any paint to these triplanes because they were interim equipment. Photographic evidence dictates otherwise. Machines coming from *Jasta* 6, such as Beckmann's old mount, had paint applied to cover the black

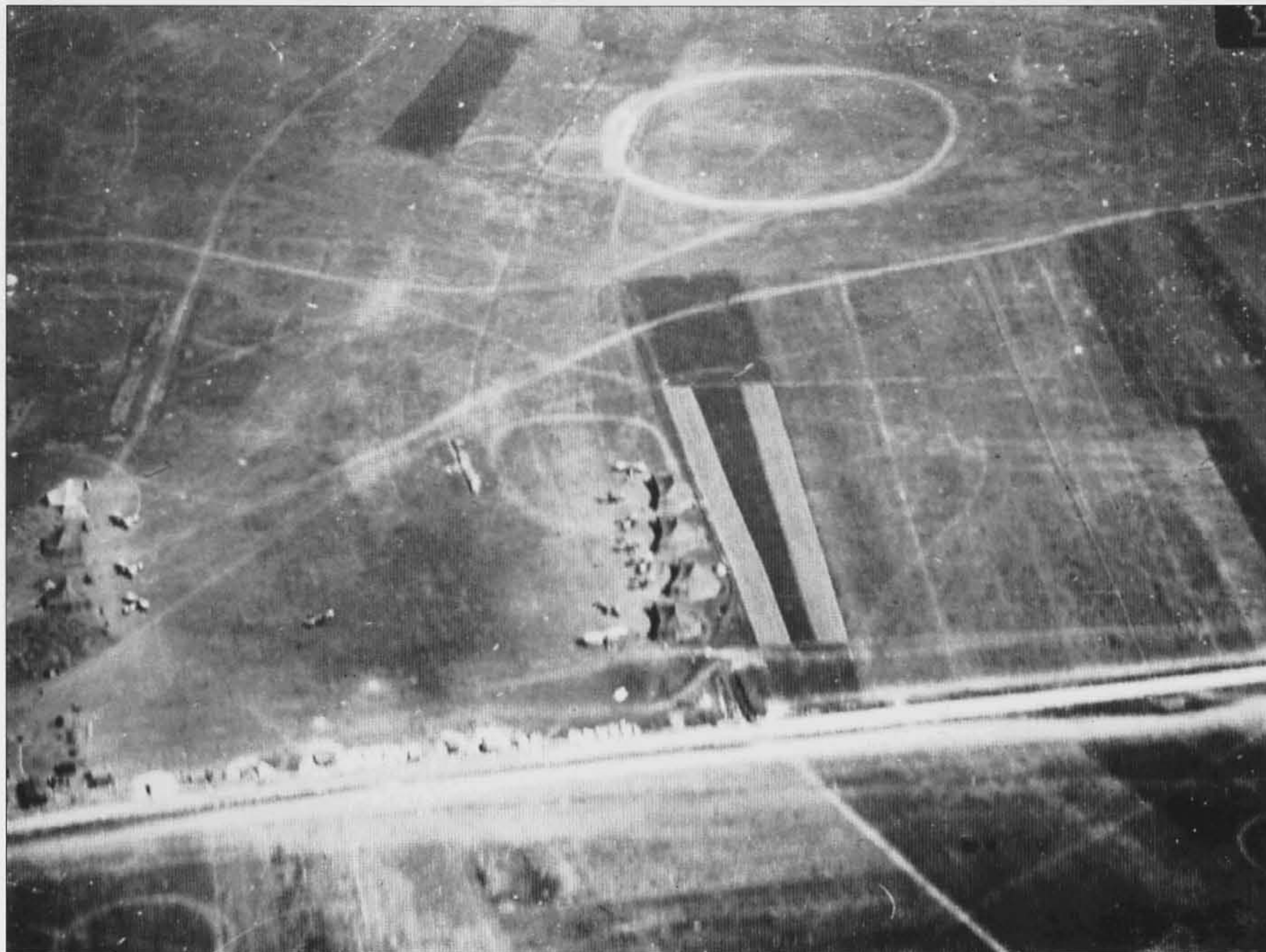
and white stripes on their horizontal tailplanes. The earlier stripes show faintly through the paint intended to cover them. This paint could only have been applied at the receiving unit. The purpose of that paint was two-fold. First it obscured the markings of the previous unit. Second, it advertised the identity of the new owners and, interim or not, this unit wanted to be correctly identified in the air. The paint looks similar in hue from aircraft to aircraft as it was used to cover unit and individual markings. Although it is possible that *Jasta* 5 chose some new colour to advertise their presence, they had been known as 'Green Tails' to friend and foe alike for nearly a year. It is extremely unlikely that the colour was anything other than the green they had used for so long. It would cover black and white tailplanes of ex-*Jasta* 6 aircraft and the corresponding red parts of machines from *Jasta* 11. Moreover, to complete the decor, black cowls on former *Jasta* 6 machines were probably painted red; those from *Jasta* 11 were probably uniformly red already.

Nevertheless, in spite of the faults in design and the used conditions of these particular triplanes, the Fokker Dr.I in the hands of a skilled pilot could still be effective, enabling it to dogfight effectively, at the same time being able to use its manoeuvrability to escape trouble. We think that Rumey was flying one of these 'new' mounts the following day when he scored his 17th victory over an SE5a east of Hamel. According to British sources (Henshaw) a pair of enemy aircraft, we would guess Rumey and Könnecke flying the first-arrived triplanes, engaged elements of No.56 Squadron near Bray-sur-Somme (or East of Hamel) and Rumey is credited with shooting down SE5a D5993 killing Lt. B W Harmon.

On 12 May *Oblt.* Flashar was 'kicked upstairs' to become commander of *Jagdgruppe* 2. The need for larger formations of single-seat 'fighter' aircraft had been increasingly obvious and had led to the origin of the first *Jagdgeschwader* in the summer of 1917 and others would follow during 1918. In addition to these permanent formations, however, it was concluded that larger

80. Liéramont from the air with most of the hangars lined up parallel to the main highway; plus others in the centre and landing strips alongside. Not as comfortable a billet as Boistrancourt!

▼ 80



NOT TO SCALE



43). PFALZ D.III 4185/17, early 1918.



44). ALBATROS D.III (OAW).



45). ALBATROS D.III (OAW), Autumn (?) 1917.

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NOT TO SCALE

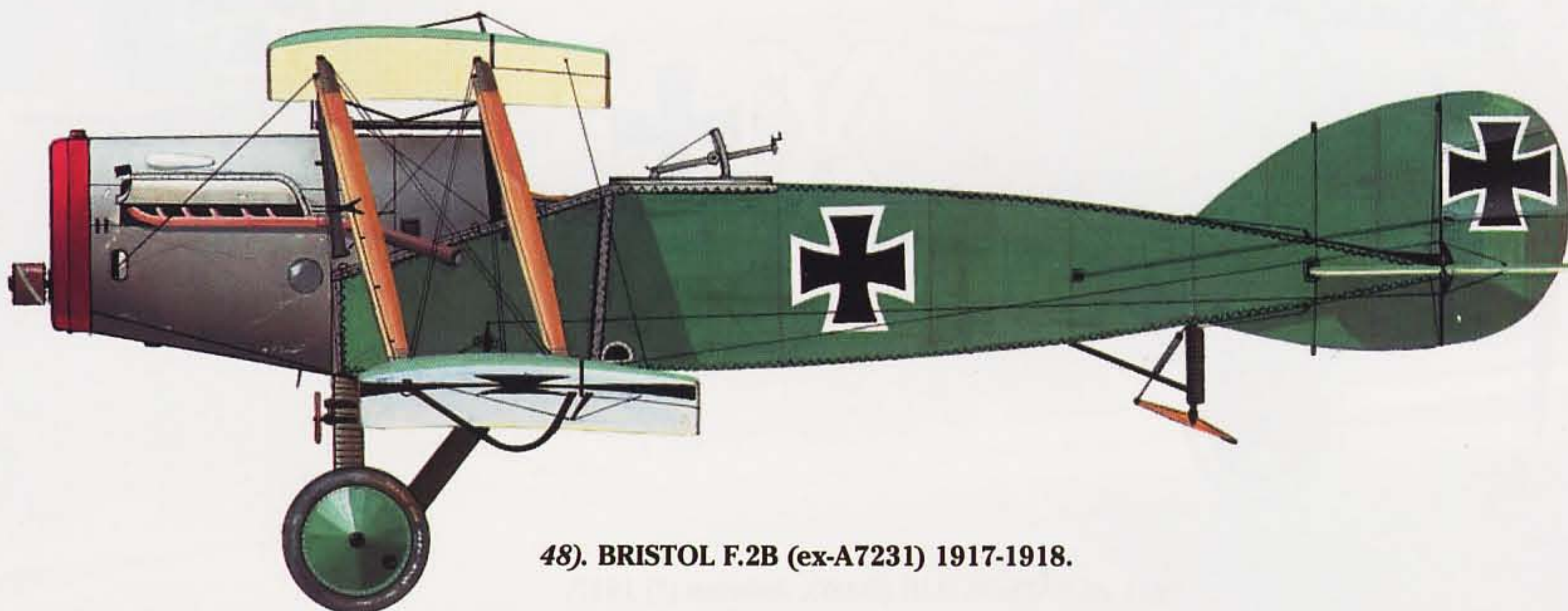


46). PFALZ D.IIIa, March 1918.

46A). PLAN VIEW.



47). LVG C.V 9474/16, 1918.



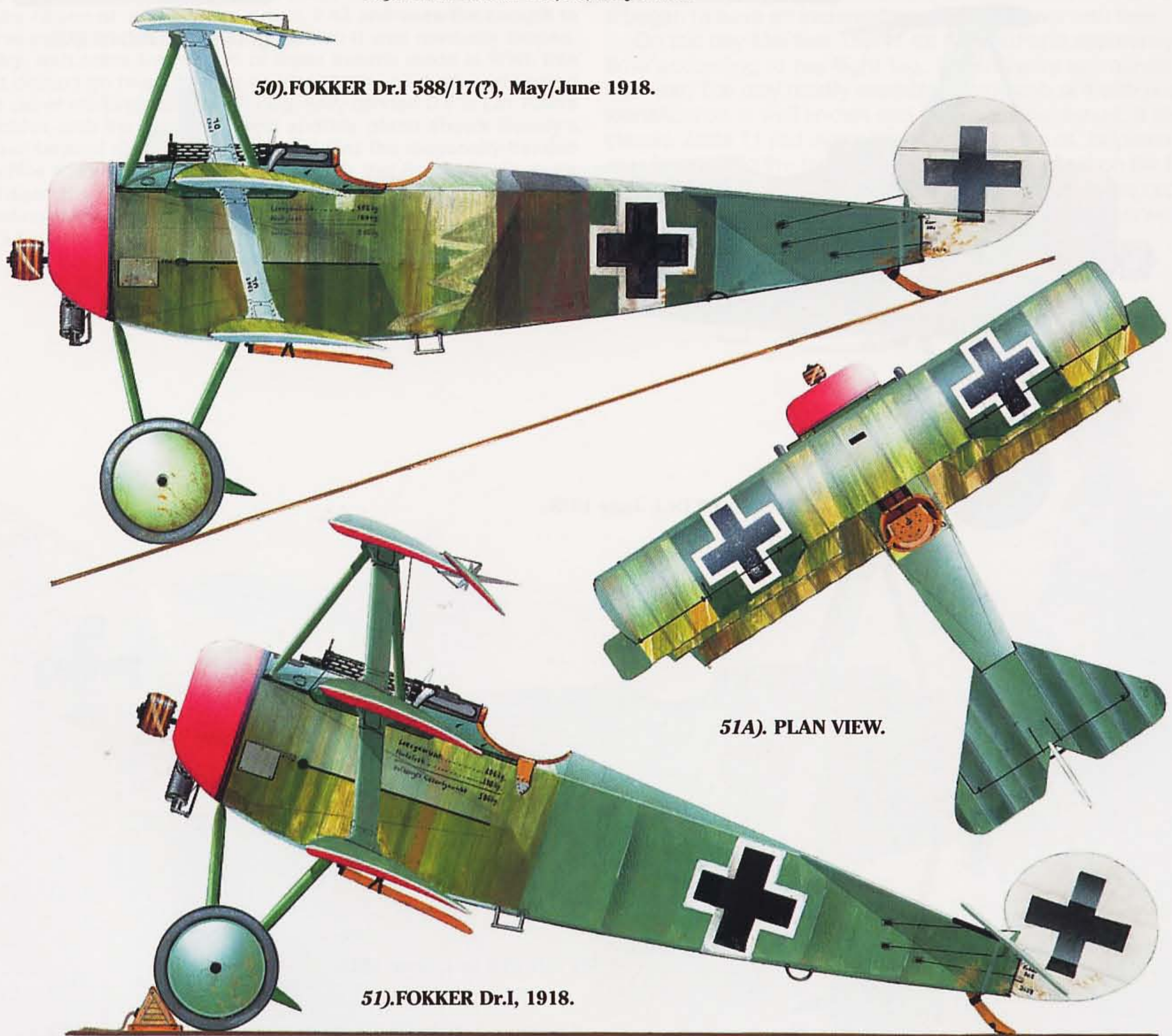
48). BRISTOL F.2B (ex-A7231) 1917-1918.

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NB: GREEN STREAKING WEATHERED TO OLIVE BROWN IN SERVICE



49). FOKKER Dr.I 139/17, May 1918.



50). FOKKER Dr.I 588/17(?), May/June 1918.

51A). PLAN VIEW.

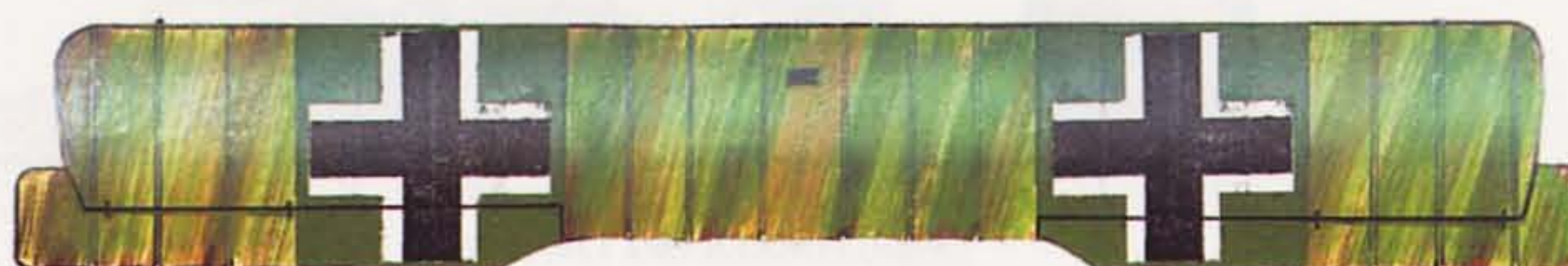
51). FOKKER Dr.I, 1918.

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NB: GREEN STREAKING WEATHERED TO OLIVE BROWN IN SERVICE



52). FOKKER Dr.I, July 1918.



52A). UPPER WING DETAIL.



53). FOKKER Dr.I, June 1918.



54). FOKKER Dr.I, June 1918.

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groupings of a less permanent nature could be formed and component *Jagdstaffeln* shifted from one group to another as the tactical need arose. At the time Flashar left to command it, *Jagdgruppe* 2 consisted only of *Jastas* 5 and 46, collocated at Cappv (and still with most of *JG* I, although some elements may already have moved to Lille and the others would soon follow). Later *Jastas* 34b and 37 would join the *Jagdgruppe* and its composition would remain thus until *Jasta* 34b become part of the Bavarian *Jagdgeschwader* IV in October. The other three remained together as a unit until the end of the war. Flashar took with him *Oblt.* Zettlemeyer as Officer for Special Duty in which capacity he had served in *Jasta* 5. On the 15th *Ltn.* Wilhelm Lehmann was given command of *Jasta* 5 in Flashar's absence as the officer in the unit with the most experience. The success of Flashar in leading the *Jasta* was a good indication that it was not an absolute that *Jastaführer* be high scorers themselves. Organisation and deputation to good air leaders were important and there is little doubt that Flashar saw these characteristics in Lehmann and convinced the High Command to officially make him the new leader. Also on the 15th, flying triplane 139/17 in combat for the first time, Josef Mai scored his 12th confirmed victory (in sequence, however, it was his 11th) at 1815 hrs. over Orvilliers. There is plenty of controversy about this victim as well. In his diary Mai cites it as a Bristol F2b and says it was Capt. J V Aspinall and Lt. P V de la Cour, or Lt. H W Sellars and Lt. C

C Robson and that he got one of them and *Ltn.* Kirschstein of *Jasta* 6 got the other - there was uncertainty about whose victims each crew was. In his flight log transcript/extract, Mai omits aircraft type entirely, possibly because the one unit history credits him with a Sopwith Dolphin on this date. Henshaw states flatly that Mai got Sellars (killed) and Robson (PoW) in C845 and Kirschstein the other crew in C4882, both being killed. Both Bristol Fighters were from No.11 Squadron. The triplane (139/17) had a long and complex history regarding its markings. The earliest known photograph of it shows it with discs on fuselage sides and turtledeck (possibly also on the centre-section). These had already been painted out and white bars painted over them. The wheel discs appear to have received a similar treatment. The cowl, cabane struts, and probably tail unit were probably in *Jasta* 11 red. The interplane struts were ex-works. A later photograph of the aircraft, still at *Jasta* 11, shows the wheels and interplane struts as red and a white band added. Then it received more paint at *Jasta* 5. On the 16th Rumey attained another victory, an SE5a variously listed as Southeast of Courcellette or over Beugny, localities that are 18 km apart! This was D3912 from No.60 Squadron, its pilot, Lt. H N J Proctor being killed in the afternoon. On the 17th both Rumey and *Ltn.* Schlömer were credited with SE5a victims. The British lost no fewer than seven SE5as that day, only two of the victors being identified by Henshaw. Locations are not much help here either, claims of Southwest of Achiet-le-Grand (Schlömer) and Puisieux (Rumey) do not match well with the reported losses. Now that there were French air units, both two-seaters and single seaters, in their operational area, *Jasta* 5 began to have an increasing ratio of combats with them.

On this day Mai flew 152/17 for the third and apparently last time according to his flight log. Controversy surrounds this machine. The only readily available photograph of it with positive identification is well known and frequently published. It shows classic *Jasta* 11 red overpainting of cowl, struts, tailplane and rear fuselage to the forward edge of the cross field on the fuselage sides and extended forward on the turtledeck to the cockpit. Additionally, this aircraft should have undergone cross conversion

81. Liéramont on the ground. Flashar is obvious with the binoculars. The nearest machine has a band in the colours and proportions of the ribbon of the *Eisernes Kreuz*, II.Kl. and uses the cockpit to serve as the buttonhole through which it was normally looped. Sadly, with some five million of these awards made in WWI, this fact doesn't do much to help us identify the pilot who originated this clever marking! Behind the diagonally-banded D.V is *Ltn.* Rath's machine with the wreath (?) and another photo shows Rumey's 'bone' beyond that. That view shows that the diagonally-banded machine had an Eta propeller and it is likely that Rath's and Rumey's did also. The ditch is a quick field expedient to perform the same function as the *Stands* that Hans Berr had erected at Boistrancourt.

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while still with *Jasta 11*, indeed while its former 'owner' Manfred von Richthofen was still alive. The other controversy is more of an historical question. Supposedly Fokker 152/17 served as the memorial to von Richthofen preserved in the Berlin museum after his death and was destroyed by Allied bombing during WWII. An aircraft reassigned to another operational unit will likely be used up in service and is not likely to find its way to a museum. There are photographic inconsistencies between known photographs of 152/17 and the machine preserved in the *Zeughaus* such as red interplane struts on the former and light-coloured ones on the latter. If one accepts the entries in Mai's flight log, it is probably misidentified.

On 18 May, Rumey claimed a Spad XIII. According to the unit history his victim was 16-victory ace and commander of *Escadrille SPA 57 Lt. Jean Chaput*. According to other records, however, Chaput fell 12 days earlier on 6 May. It seems unlikely that this identification is correct, therefore, and his victim cannot be identified. The combat occurred near Moreuil. This was Rumey's sixth victory since Könnecke had scored. Indeed, it was more than a month since Könnecke's last and one has to guess that he might have been on leave for all or part of this time. The respective scores now had Rumey ahead by two victories, 19 to 17.

On 19 May, Könnecke had a confirmed victory over a DH9 according to one source and an F2b according to another German source. Although the British lost eight DH9s that day, Henshaw states that Könnecke's victim was actually a Bristol F2b, B1336 from No.62 Squadron. The crew was Lts. D A Savage MC and E W Collins, both of whom survived. Misidentifications like this were extremely common. The combat took place North of Demuin Forest or East of Villers Bretonneux depending once again on the source, but closely spaced in any case. On the 20th it was Rumey's turn again, being credited with a Sopwith Dolphin or a Sopwith Camel (again, disagreeing with German sources). It seems likely his victim was Capt. L E Whitehead in Camel D1876

82. More from Liéramont. The aircraft now have fat transitional Balkenkreuze. Nearest is Flashar's 'Faust', then a dark-painted machine, then Rumey's variably-proportioned striped Albatros, then another dark-painted machine.

▼ 82

from No.65 Squadron who was seen in combat with five triplanes Southeast of Albert at 1820 hrs. Rumey reported the combat as being South of Morlancourt. In what was probably the same action, *Ltn. Schlömer* obtained a victory, once again either a Camel or a DH4, depending upon source. His victim cannot be identified whether a Camel or a DH4, and went unconfirmed. On the 21st *Ltn. Lehmann* was credited with a Sopwith Camel, but once again it is not possible to match this claim with a victim.

A more momentous event occurred on 21 May, when both *Vzfw. Könnecke* and *Vzfw. Rumey* were awarded the *Goldenen Militär Verdienst Kreuz*, the highest Prussian award a German enlisted man could receive, and sometimes referred to as the 'enlisted man's *Pour le Mérite*'. Such a simultaneous award was unusual, especially in view of the fact that only 69 of these awards were made to fliers and only 23 of these to fighter pilots (these figures according to O'Connor, who also lists the date of the awards as 12 May instead of 21 May, a not uncommon situation where award, notification, and presentation were sometimes separated by days or weeks). Unlike the *Pour le Mérite*, there was no 'magic number' of victories a non-commissioned pilot needed to win this award, indeed one fighter pilot received it whose final score was four victories. Nevertheless, most of the awards were made for long and outstanding service when the individual's score stood around 10. With three of their non-commissioned pilots receiving the Golden Military Merit Cross (and arguably Hans Müller should have received it as well), *Jasta 5* had more recipients than any other *Jagdstaffel*. In all there were five NCOs who were awarded this decoration, went on to be commissioned and to receive the *Pour-le-Mérite*, and two of these, Rumey and Könnecke, were in *Jasta 5*. Only the end of the war prevented *Ltn. Josef Mai* from joining his two comrades in this second distinction. On 26 May, *Gefr. Walter Dietzmann* was assigned to *Jasta 5*. There was a non-event this same day that is significant. Several sources, including *Jasta Pilots* by Franks, *et al.*, state that *Jasta 5* moved this day (or at least a date in May), to Villers Sire Nicole. This is taken from one of the German war chronologies (not repeated in the other) for *Jasta 5* and cannot be correct. That displacement would have been nearly 100 kilometres and would have removed the unit from their patrol area. Yet, they



continued to fight and score and fall in the same sector along the Somme for some time *after* this date.

The next victory was on 30 May when Könnecke claimed a double. One source credits him with both, a DH4 and a Camel, the other credits him with the DH4, but disallows the Camel. Henshaw does not assign this victory to any British loss, but his Camel victim might have been D6640 of Lt. W A Scott PoW from No.70 Squadron in a combat east of Albert or Dernancourt (British) or at Ribemont-sur-Ancre (Könnecke's claim). The DH4 is tougher to attribute. Another complicating factor is that of *Ltn.* Schlömer also claimed a Camel in the same action at Heilly, and Könnecke claimed still another Camel later that was confirmed. Franks, *et al.* state it may have come from No.70 Squadron. With one (or two) confirmations, Könnecke was either only one behind or tied with Rumey in their scoring race. On the following day there was a big fight over Morlancourt in which Könnecke claimed another victory, a Sopwith Dolphin. Although the British lost a Dolphin that day, assignment as Könnecke's victim is difficult. Once more, one source says it was confirmed, another that it was not. More importantly, this was a tragic day for *Jasta 5* because *Ltn.* Hans Schlömer, a very well-liked member of the unit, was killed in this same action when fire from an enemy fighter exploded his aircraft in mid-air.

The end of May, beginning of June, 1918 is an appropriate time to take an overall look at the status of the German Empire and her units in the field. The Spring Offensives had gained much ground, but had failed in their intended purposes to drive through and capture the channel ports and separate the French and British armies. That they had pushed as close as 70 km to Paris and were able to shell the capital was a hollow victory. From both necessity and desperation the Germans would continue to press attacks, but the tide had clearly turned. The manpower and supply situations were now critical, Germany simply no longer had the means to mount another offensive on the scale of *Operation Michael*. One very important result of the critical shortage of *matériel* was the abrupt drop in the photographic record of *Jasta 5* aircraft and activities. Whereas before, the photographic record of the *Jasta* was among the very best of any unit in the *Luftstreitkräfte*, after about May this record practically dried up because of film shortage. If two-seater units could not obtain film for aerial photographs, then it is quite understandable that there would be great difficulty for other units or individuals to obtain it for what would be considered 'frivolous' uses. There would still be 'official' photographs of aces and their aircraft for propaganda purposes, but researchers are severely handicapped by the decline of photographic record in many units.

During an evening patrol on the first of June, *Jasta 5* tangled with some DH4s that were well-flown and well-defended. There were no victories for either side, but Mai's triplane, 592/17 was badly shot up. Whether that machine was serviceable the following day or not, Mai had a victory in a triplane over a Sopwith Camel. Rumey claimed a Camel in the same action at the same time and place and it appears that this was another case of two claims for the same victory with both being credited. The British loss was 2/Lt. A Devout in Camel C8291 from No.65 Squadron, shot down in flames and killed South of Hangard at 1845 hrs. Air action remained intense over the Somme and there were more scraps on 3 June with DH4s once again, Mai expending all his ammunition, and 4 June, both days without success or loss. The latter day saw *Ltn.* Schlömer's funeral at Cappy. On 5 June there were more fights with aggressive Camel (one account) or SE5a (another account) units, but without victories or losses. On 6 June Mai claimed an SE5a over Hébuterne, but it was disallowed. Interestingly, this claim appears in both unit histories, but not in his flight log or its expanded 'diary'. Rumey had better success the following day claiming another SE5a South of Rosières for his 22nd victory. His victim was 2/Lt. J J Dawe from No.24 Squadron in B611 killed at that place in the late morning. Mai also records combats without result at about the same time (around noon) with DH4s. On 9 June, Rumey claimed an 'enemy aircraft' that was disallowed as the Germans launched still another attack in an attempt to bring the war to a quick conclusion before the increasing weight of American military power placed the outcome of the conflict beyond any doubt. Like its predecessors, this offen-



▲ 83
83. Probably taken at Cappy is this reverse-printed photo of what was probably von Hippel's last *Blitz*-marked machine, an Albatros D.Va, perhaps 6550/17. Noteworthy is that the fuselage is natural wood rather than grey, the 'head' of the *Blitz* was reduced almost to zero, wheels were apparently grey, only the spinner was red, the field-modified crosses were essentially 'one-offs', it had another Garuda propeller, and there were white 'H's, once again under the lozenge-covered wings.

sive gained much territory, but no decisive victory.

On 13 June, *Ltn.* Lehmann claimed his fourth victory, an SE5a over Bouzincourt. Perhaps his victim was Capt. J D Belgrave from No.60 Squadron in D5988 who was killed, although Henshaw gives credit for the victory to two-seaters. On 17 June, Josef Mai flew Fokker D.VII 595/18, the first record we have of any D.VIIs reaching the unit. On 18 June, sad to say, *Ltn.* Hans von Hippel was posted away. He had been a valuable source for photographs and commentary and that had now disappeared from *Jasta 5*. No great fighter pilot, he was nevertheless a successful one serving his Fatherland with loyalty and honour. He would go first to *Idflieg* and then to a high-numbered *Jasta*. That was a commonplace event, the posting of pilots with little scoring away from elite units and to lesser ones, in this case *Jasta 71*. It was also thought that these pilots with combat experience would help develop those pilots without. In the event, von Hippel made two more claims in *Jasta 71*, both of them disallowed.

Another interesting development occurred on 25 June. Fritz Rumey claimed another victory over an SE5a West of Albert or Roye (depending upon source) and it was confirmed as his 24th. By now victories for Rumey were certainly not out of the ordinary, but this one was because it was credited to *Leutnant* Fritz Rumey. Clearly he had been commissioned between the 9th and the 25th although we do not know the exact date. According to Henshaw his victim was Lt. E B Wilson who was forced to land a burning C1800 from No.24 Squadron although the pilot survived, wounded. In a later combat that day Mai chased an F2b down from 5000 to 1000 m before being forced to retire low over British lines without achieving the victory. The following day elements of *Jasta 5* tangled with Camels from No.65 Squadron near Albert. The good news was that Rumey got still another victory, this one over Lt. E C Eaton in a Sopwith Camel from No.65 Squadron, D6630, who was killed East of Bouzincourt around 2025 hrs. The British report lists their opponents as 'Pfalzes' likely because they were not yet that experienced at seeing the D.VII at the front. It seems certain that if Josef Mai was flying a D.VII as his flight log confirms, then *Jasta 5*'s top ace would have had one too. Whether then or later, Rumey found the D.VII less amenable to the application of the 'candy stripes' he had applied to his Albatros

fighters. At some point it was reported that he flew an 'all-yellow' Fokker D.VII, but there are no known photos and exactly when he used this colour scheme is unknown. This flight was also disastrous because *Jasta 5* lost another *Jastaführer* when *Ltn.* Wilhelm Lehmann was shot down and killed near Albert by *Lt.* Field E Kindley of No.65 Squadron. This same day *Offstv.* Josef Mai became the third enlisted man in the unit to receive the Military Service Cross and the 11th fighter pilot to do so whereas a couple of dozen non-*Jasta* airmen had received the award by that time.

On 27 June it was dominantly evening action once again. Nevertheless, on a morning patrol Rumey scored yet again. This time his victim was a Sopwith Dolphin from No.23 Squadron, D3961, flown by *Lt.* S C K Welinkar (or Welinker) made PoW at Bray-sur-Somme and died of his wounds. That evening both Rumey and Mai claimed victims, Camels from No.70 Squadron. Mai said he downed his victim at 2133 hrs. near Thiepval and that shortly thereafter he saw a second Camel in flames over Bray-sur-Somme that was Rumey's victim. He further lists the names of the probable victims, whether he obtained this after the war or not, Henshaw thinks this was another example of double claiming, both Germans making claims for the single victory over Camel D6532 flown by *Lt.* C S Sheldon who was killed. But Henshaw also shows the loss of D9396 with 2/*Lt.* J Fulton wounded and made prisoner. Mai lists the name as 'G Fulton' and it seems likely that Mai's claim was valid, regardless of which victim fell to which pilot. On the 29th Mai's *Kette* tangled with a flight of Sopwith Dolphins and there was an inconclusive combat with one of them in which Mai expended all his ammunition.

The pace continued as July began. A morning patrol (started at 0833 hrs.) saw Mai's *Kette* in combat with eight Bristol Fighters with neither side scoring a victory. But it was another evening patrol that would provide a victory when Rumey brought down another Camel, this one C8264 from No.65 Squadron again, *Lt.* H H Borden killed over Morlancourt. Rumey would score again on the third. According to one source his victim was a Sopwith Dolphin and another says it was a Camel. The British lost one Dolphin this day according to Henshaw, that being C3903 from No.23 Squadron, its pilot *Lt.* J T McKay being killed over Villers

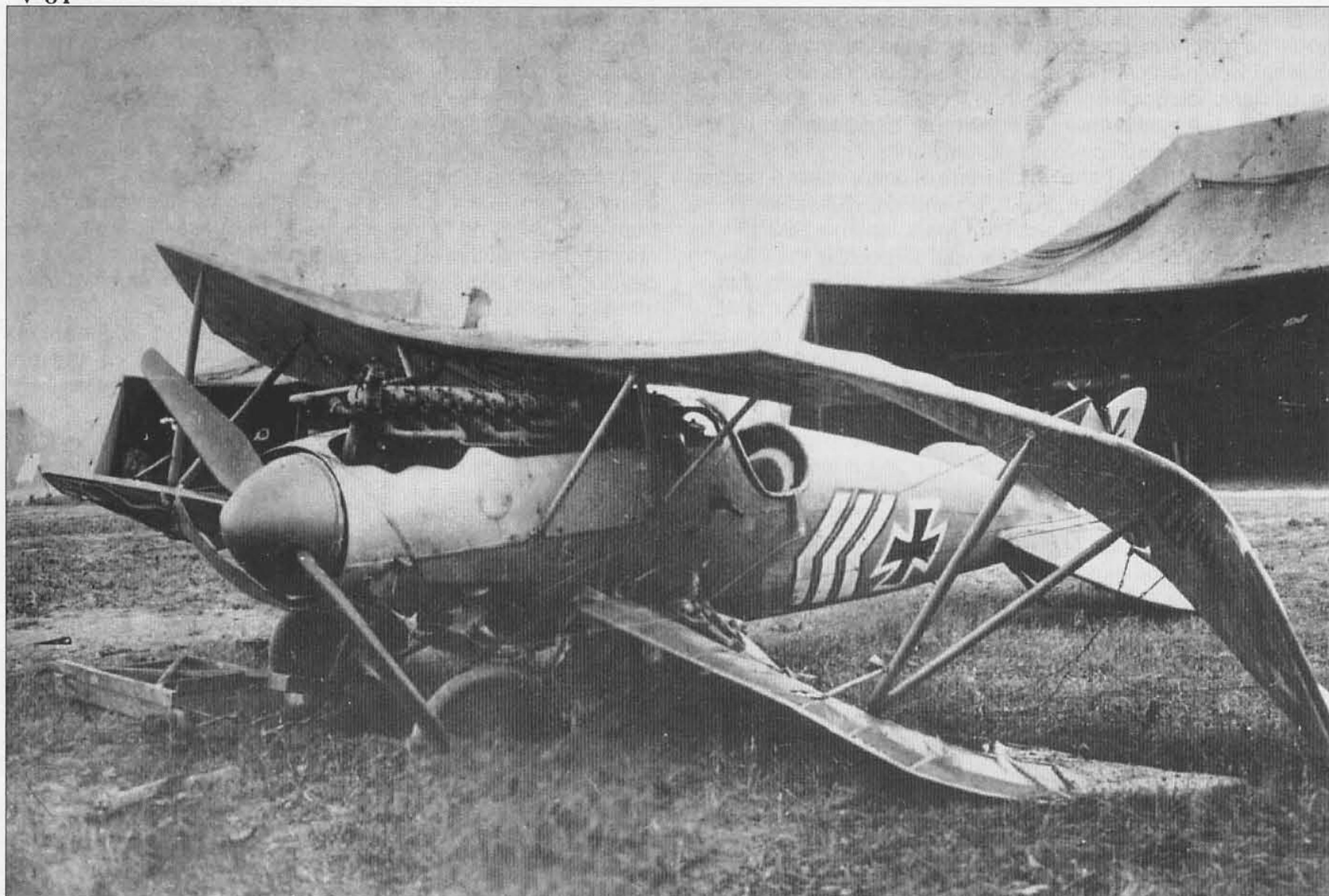
Bretonneux. He makes an uncertain assignment of this victory to a pilot from *Jasta 49*, but there are discrepancies for this claim is well within *Jasta 5*'s patrol area and at Rumey's preferred evening hour. Rumey's case seems strong. On the third also, *Oblt.* Otto Schmidt was assigned to be the new commander of the unit.

Otto Schmidt as *Staffelführer* and the evolution of air combat

After promoting from within the unit with Lehmann, the German high command chose to pass over Rumey and bring in someone from outside. Whether Rumey's humble origins and earlier enlisted service were factors, or whether the high command simply wanted someone with broader experience is not known, but Schmidt was an excellent choice. A cavalryman turned aviator, he began his flying career as an observer in 1916 over Verdun. He and his pilot were credited with two victories, one of them a balloon. These victories were scored in *FFA 25* and his pilot was none other than Renatus Theiller. Schmidt's aggressiveness led to him to flying training late in the year and a posting to *Jasta 7* after he graduated. After downing two more balloons he became *Staffelführer* of *Jasta 32*. Here he flamed another balloon and shot down a Spad before being transferred to *Jasta 29* as *Führer*. His penchant for balloons continued as he destroyed three more and an aircraft before being seriously wounded on 18 October 1917. After he took over command of *Jasta 5* he scored several more victories, some aircraft and some balloons. By October he had an official 19 victories and the unit histories credit him with up to six more. The fact that he was recommended for the *Pour le Mérite* would support these additional claims. Like Mai and several others, however, the Armistice intervened before the award could be made.

84 and 85. A puzzling pair of photos. The first, an OAW-built D.Va has been attributed to *Jasta 46* at Cappy. It bears *Eiserne Kreuze* and the chevrons don't seem as deep as in the second photograph. It shows Jupp Cremer's OAW-built D.Va, an almost complete serial being 674X/17, the 'X' most likely an '8'. It bore three very similar chevrons, but had the later transitional *Balkenkreuze*. It was photographed at Cappy, almost certainly in April or May 1918.

▼ 84



The air war had changed dramatically since 1916. At the beginning of the conflict aeroplanes were curiosities that might have some value for observation and reconnaissance. By 1916 that value was well established and the major combatants placed most of their air assets into reconnaissance/photography/artillery observation roles. As the war progressed, a greater proportion of these air assets went to form fighter units. Indeed, for each of the combatants the ratio of fighter squadrons increased as the war progressed attempting to have such units sweep the skies of their opponents and establish the elusive 'air superiority'. The increasing importance of fighters was such that, as the Germans attempted to use them to deny observation and reconnaissance to their enemies, the French and British created more fighter squadrons to counteract the German move and thereby protect their aircraft engaged in observation-related activities. Thus the air was filled at times with nothing but single-seat aircraft engaged in dogfighting. A measure of that is seen by the record of *Jasta 5* from mid-1918 onward. Except for combat with, mostly, some day bombers such as DH4/DH9 or Breguets, and the occasional observation balloon kill, nearly all of the unit's victories during the last six months of the war were over fighters; F2bs, Camels, Dolphins, SE5as and the like. The last victory over what was probably an art. obs. aircraft was by Lehmann over an Armstrong-Whitworth on 24 April 1918. After that combats involved only fighters and the occasional day bomber or balloon. Clearly the game had become more difficult and more dangerous as the nature of their opponents changed through the last six and a half months of the war.

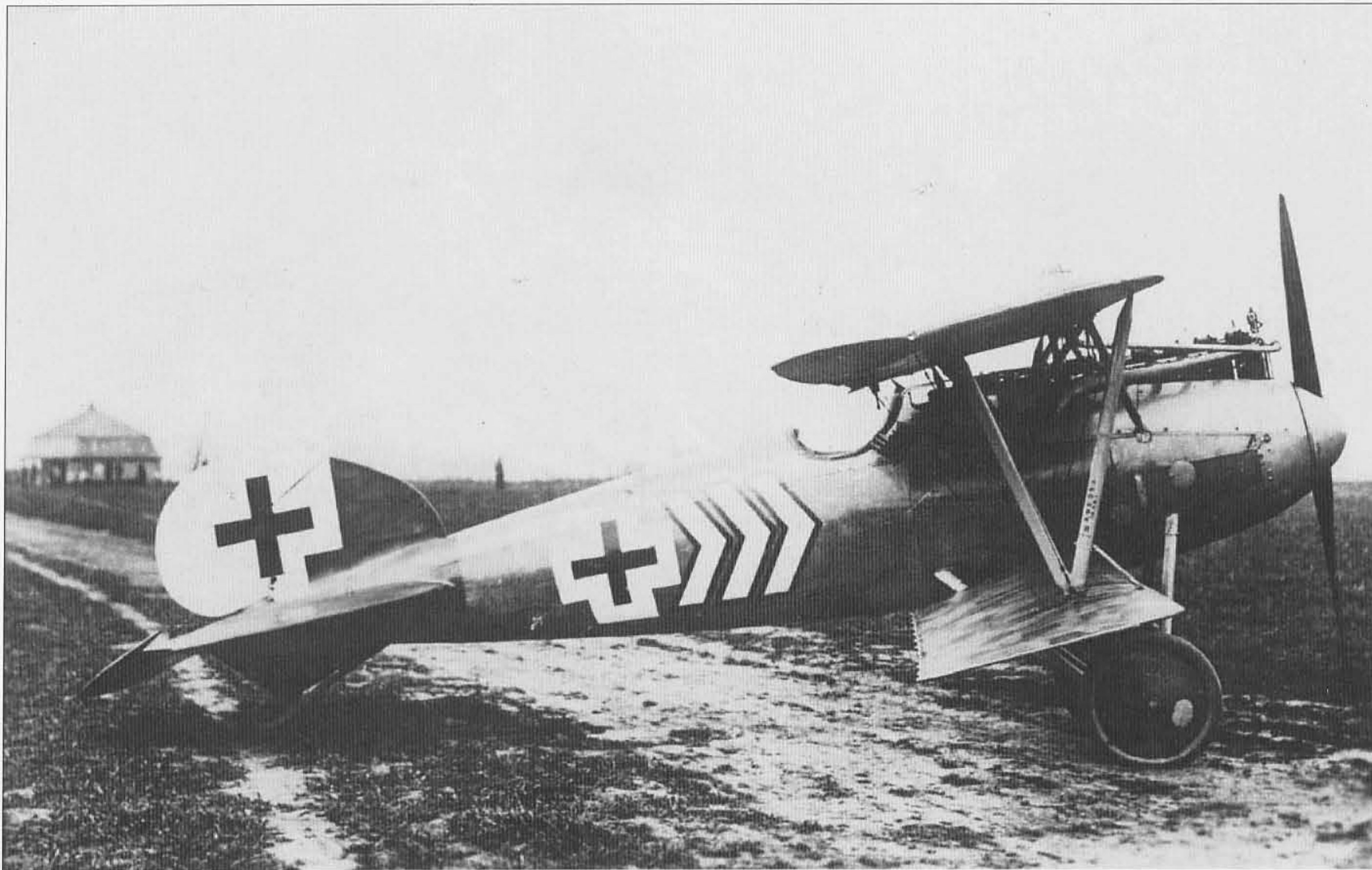
On 5 July, a morning flight led to Mai's 16th victory. This occurred at 0920 hrs. near Guillaumont and his victim was another Bristol F2b from No.48 Squadron. Its occupants were 2/Lt. B S Hillis and Sgt. S J Pratt both killed in C791. On 9 July, it was now *Leutnant* K  nnecke who scored a victory. It was his 21st, and now with commissioned rank, he was clearly eligible for the 'Blue Max'. This was over a 'Dolphin' that he flamed North of Albert (or Southwest of Bapaume or Northeast of Albert depending upon source). The British lost no Dolphin that day and Henshaw suggests it was Bristol F2b B1113 from No.48 Squadron, both crewmen, Lt. E D Shaw USAS and Sgt. T W Smith, killed. Mai also engaged this aircraft and witnessed K  nnecke's victory.

On 10 July, *Ltn.* Fritz Rumey received his *Pour le M  rite*. This

must have been cause for rejoicing, but the grim business at hand probably made the celebration more subdued than it would have been previously. Two German records show that Mai recorded a victory on 16 July over a Dolphin Southeast of Grandcourt (or at Courcellete). Strangely, neither his flight log or its expanded diary format lists it. The British lost a Dolphin and three Camels that day, but attribution is very uncertain. The same source also gives K  nnecke a victory at 1755 hrs. on 19 July over a Camel Northeast of Etinehem and the other also confirms it, as does Mai's diary. In the latter, Mai also relates how he closed to within 20 m of a Camel, but his guns jammed with a double feed. No.209 Squadron lost two Camels in this area (near Cappy) on this date, but Henshaw attributes both to *Flak*. We suspect one of them really was K  nnecke's victim. The following day Mai confirmed a victory, DH4 B7865 from No.57 Squadron Lt. J T Kirkland was killed and 2/Lt. E J Riley PoW. This occurred at 1205 hrs. at Achiet-le-Petit. On 22 July, *Ltn.* Willi Schuster was killed over the aerodrome on a test flight of a Fokker Dr.I. According to one account Mai made a claim on 27 July that was not confirmed and he makes no mention of it.

August began with a scrap with Sopwith Dolphins from No.23 Squadron early in the morning over the lines at Warfus  e. Captain J M McAlery was wounded in this action and Mai clearly thought it was he who did the wounding. True or not, it was not a victory and Mai made no claim, although Franks, *et al.*, suggest he may have shot down a Camel.

The impending Allied offensive at Amiens was well known to the Germans and on 4 August, several units withdrew to more defensible positions. In *Jasta 5*'s case this was to Moislains where their aerodrome was East of town across the Canal du Nord. This was a withdrawal of about 25 km or most of what they had advanced from Li  ramont to Cappy when hopes of victory were much greater. The anticipated blow fell on 8 August with the Allied push in the Somme region. The combined British-French offensive featured an overwhelming air armada. There were over 1900 Allied aircraft opposed by 365 German aircraft, only 140 of them fighters. German fighter pilots flew and fought all day long, some of them for up to ten hours. At *Jasta 5* the story was the same. Mai records taking off on his first sortie at 0830 hrs. and landing from his last at 1825 hrs. In their first combat they tangled with what were described as Bristol Fighters from No.48



Squadron, Mai scoring a victory over one at 0900 hrs. near Méricourt-sur-Somme, not Méricourt. According to Henshaw, the only Bristol Fighters lost by No.48 Squadron were in the afternoon. It seems far more likely that Mai's victim, and another shot down in flames five minutes later by Könnecke, were DH9s from No.98 Squadron or DH4s from No.57 Squadron. In his diary Mai acknowledges that these might have been DH9s and that Méricourt may have been confused with Maricourt, the first South of Albert, the second East of Albert. The next patrol of the *Kette* from *Jasta 5* had Könnecke achieve victory over an SE5a at 1145 hrs. West of Méricourt. It seems likely that this was a No.41 Squadron machine because the time and places are close and this assignment is reinforced by the claim of a 'yellow Fokker' by one of the pilots. That sounds like an erroneous claim for Fritz Rumey's machine, but *JG III* was also in the area and used a lot of yellow as well. Probably in a different *Kette*, *Oblt.* Schmidt scored a victory over an SE5a at 1415 hrs. at Chipilly. With British aircraft being shot down in the numbers that they were this day, it is difficult to pinpoint a particular victim, but once again, it was No.41 Squadron who had a pilot wounded. This was Lt. W A Foot in E1326 '1'. During a third sortie, taking off at 1606 hrs., Mai was in combat but his synchroniser failed and he nearly shot off his propeller. He made an emergency landing at 1615 hrs. He and his *Kette* took off again at 1735 hrs. At 1815 hrs. Könnecke downed another SE5a Northwest of Römerlager and Mai a DH9 at 1855 hrs. at Ham. Both were confirmed, but the chaos of the day makes attribution difficult. Mai's victory total now stood at 19, but this second victory would not be confirmed until 13 September, another delay toward a possible *Pour le Mérite*. Although the British lost some 135 aircraft, the Germans lost as many as 50 and this was a very real victory for the Allies. Indeed, coupled with the inability of the German army to stop the Allied ground offensive, the air war was now beyond redemption. Allied gains in excess of 10 km this day could not be healed with counter-attacks and not really stopped, merely slowed. It was this day that Ludendorf referred to as the 'blackest day in

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the history of the German army'. He offered to resign, but the *Kaiser* rejected this, adding that it was no longer likely that the war would end favourably for Germany and should be halted.

The next day, 9 August, saw a continuation of the heavy air fighting. Könnecke scored three times for *Jasta 5*'s total for the day: a Bristol F2b, an SE5a, and another F2b in that order. British losses were heavy again on this day, although none of these confirmed victories can be associated with a particular British loss. This 'triple' brought Könnecke's score to 28, only two behind Fritz Rumey who would not be heard from for the entire month of August, undoubtedly because he had a 30-day leave to accompany the award of his *Pour le Mérite*.

On 12 August both Könnecke and Mai scored, bringing the former's total to 29 and the latter's to the magic 20. Had he been commissioned instead of an *Offizierstellvertreter* at this time, Mai would have been eligible for the *Pour le Mérite*. Könnecke's victim was an SE5a (possibly from No.40 Squadron according to Franks, *et al.*) and Mai's a Sopwith Camel. Mai claimed that his victory at 1215 hrs. was over Lt. K M Walker from No.209 Squadron in D9657 at Maricourt. Henshaw gives credit to Lothar von Richthofen for all three Camels lost by No.209 that day (with a double claim for one by *Ltn.* Just of *Jasta 11*). According to Mai each of the three German pilots accounted for one of the Camels. No information at all is available for Könnecke's claim. British losses were heavy and records on both sides skimpy during this hectic period. On 14 August Könnecke scored his 30th victory placing him level with Rumey. This was a DH9 according to German records, again without any attribution. Mai was in-

86. Crash-landed at Cappy by Oppenhorst, this heart-marked D.Va machine is also seen in a photo with the LVG 'hack' earlier at Boistrancourt. That shows black 'O's under the painted wings of this D.Va. Once again, the field-modified *Balkenkreuze* were essentially 'one-offs'.

87. The crash of Flashar's well-known '*gepanzerte Faust*' at Cappy, April-May, 1918.



volved in combats nearly every day, including on 15 and 16 August, without result. But on the 19th he had better fortune. This day he was flying Fokker D.VII 898/18. He first flew it on 17 August and as late as 1 October 1918. On 19 August his *Kette* took off first at 0735 hrs. and soon tangled with a flight of Bristol Fighters from No.48 Squadron over Lihons at 0805 hrs. *Kette* leader Mai downed two Bristols in quick succession. According to Henshaw they had a mid-air collision killing both crews. If true, that didn't matter, because pilots attacking colliding aircraft were given credit for the victories regardless of the mechanism. All four crewmen were killed; 2/Lts. E S Glasse and C W Woodend in C926 and Lt. R H Davis and 2/Lt. E G Locke in D8027. Mai's diary does not mention a collision. Later in the flight he made it a triple for the day, shooting down an SE5a over Le Transloy. The pilot of E1348 from No.56 Squadron, Lt. T D Hazen was killed. The first two victories were quickly confirmed, but the second was disputed by *Ltn.* Aloys Heldmann from *Jasta* 10 so that Mai did not get confirmation until 7 October.

Jasta 5 did not score again until 24 August when Könnecke downed an SE5a at 1920 hrs. North of Bapaume. There are a couple of possible victims for this claim, but it seems best fitted with the loss of D6970 from No.1 Squadron, 1/Lt. R H Ritter USAS, killed. More significant, this is the day that *Jasta* 5 actually moved to Villers Sire Nicole. Moves such as this at this stage of the war were forced by a general collapse of the German front. Withdrawal was more or less orderly, but forced and more or less continuous. *Jasta* 5's new home in the Valenciennes sector was probably located just east of the village of Villers Sire Nicole

▼ 87

in the direction of Vieux Reng.

Only two days after the move *Jasta* 5 was in action for an evening balloon strafe. *Oberleutnant* Schmidt destroyed one South of Morcourt at 1645 hrs. and *Uffz.* Leicht destroyed another 15 minutes later at Harbonnières. This was *Uffz.* Leicht's first victory (Schmidt's 11th) and, indeed, the first reference we find that he was with the unit. In a similar vein, *Ltn.* Friedrich Vollbracht is mentioned for the first time on 29 August when he was credited with an F2b at 1000 hrs. over 'Tilloy' (Tilloy-léz-Cambrai? or Ligny-Thilloy?, probably the latter). The British lost only one Bristol Fighter this day, E2453 from No.22 Squadron, the crew both being killed: Lt. J J Borrowman and 2/Lt. J Amos. The time is reasonable and the location, also listed as 'Ligny' (probably Ligny-Thilloy), is also possible. Later in the day Könnecke shot down a Camel at 2015 hrs. South of Péronne. The British lost several Camels this day, but the identification of the victim is uncertain. On this day also, *Gefr.* Peter Peltzer was wounded in combat, crashed near Herbécourt and died of his wounds in hospital at Bernes on 31 August. This is also the only record we have of him having been with the unit. On the last day of August *Ltn.* Otto Könnecke was awarded the *Pour le Mérite*. We hear nothing of him for the month of September, indeed until well into October, suggesting he had also received a 30-day leave as a reward for his entry into the ranks of the *Pour le Mérite-träger*.

Black September

The most destructive month of the Great War for Allied air assets began with large claims by the Germans and equally as huge



losses acknowledged by the French and British, but for the first two days of the month it was units other than *Jasta 5* who gained victories. On the third, however, *Jasta 5* joined in the scoring during an evening patrol. Taking off at 1800 hrs. they attacked a flight of No.20 Squadron Bristol Fighters. Vollbracht was credited with a victim at 1840 hrs. over Havrincourt Wood, followed quickly by Rumey's claim at 1847 hrs. South of Péronne, and Mai's claim at 1850 hrs. North of Bertincourt. According to Henshaw, only a single F2b was lost, the crew of Lt. W F Washington and 2/Lt. K Penrose in B1344 were killed. Other of No.20 Squadron's aircraft were badly shot up, however, and an observer in another machine was killed. Franks, *et al.*, list the loss as D7202 from No.98 Squadron, 2/Lts. R T Ingram and K J W Dennitts both killed. They also attribute the death of 2/Lt. F J Ralph, DFC, from No.20 Squadron to Vollbracht. Crews of No.20 Squadron claimed no fewer than five of their attackers, but *Jasta 5* had no losses and it is possible other German units might have suffered. 4 September was another busy day. Schmidt claimed an F2b at 1115 hrs. at Gouzeaucourt that was confirmed, but cannot be identified. Rumey, a Camel at 1830 hrs. over Quéant with the same result, in spite of the fact that the British lost a lot of Camels on that day, no fewer than *eight* from No.70 Squadron alone.

The pace of aerial fighting continued to increase in response to the Allied ground offensives. On 5 September Mai's *Kette* took off at 0943 hrs. on a patrol Northeast of Cambrai where they encountered SE5as from No.64 Squadron. Rumey claimed one at 1005 hrs., his victim being Lt. W A F Cowgill, PoW, in C1909 'D' North of Bouchain. Five minutes later Mai brought down E5978, its pilot Lt. V Harvey was unwounded and also PoW West of Bugnicourt. Strangely, the loss of Harvey is not mentioned at all by Henshaw, but the specificity of Mai's claim makes it seem legitimate enough. In this action *Ltn.* Schenk was slightly wounded, but remained with the unit. *Jasta 5* would score again on 7 September; Rumey a DH4 over St. Quentin at 1125 hrs. This might have been D9271 from No.25 Squadron that was shot up, but not down. The pilot, 2/Lt. C H Saffery was not wounded, but his observer, 2/Lt. J Harrington was; Franks, *et al.*, specify that this DH4 was A7587 from No.205 Squadron, Lt. D J T Mellor killed and 2/Lt. J C Walker PoW. Just a few minutes later *Oblt.* Schmidt downed a balloon at 1145 hrs. Southwest of Bertincourt.

A week would go by before *Jasta 5* would score again, a week of mostly bad weather. Fritz Rumey shot down an SE5a in the morning of 14 September, South of Le Catelet, his victim

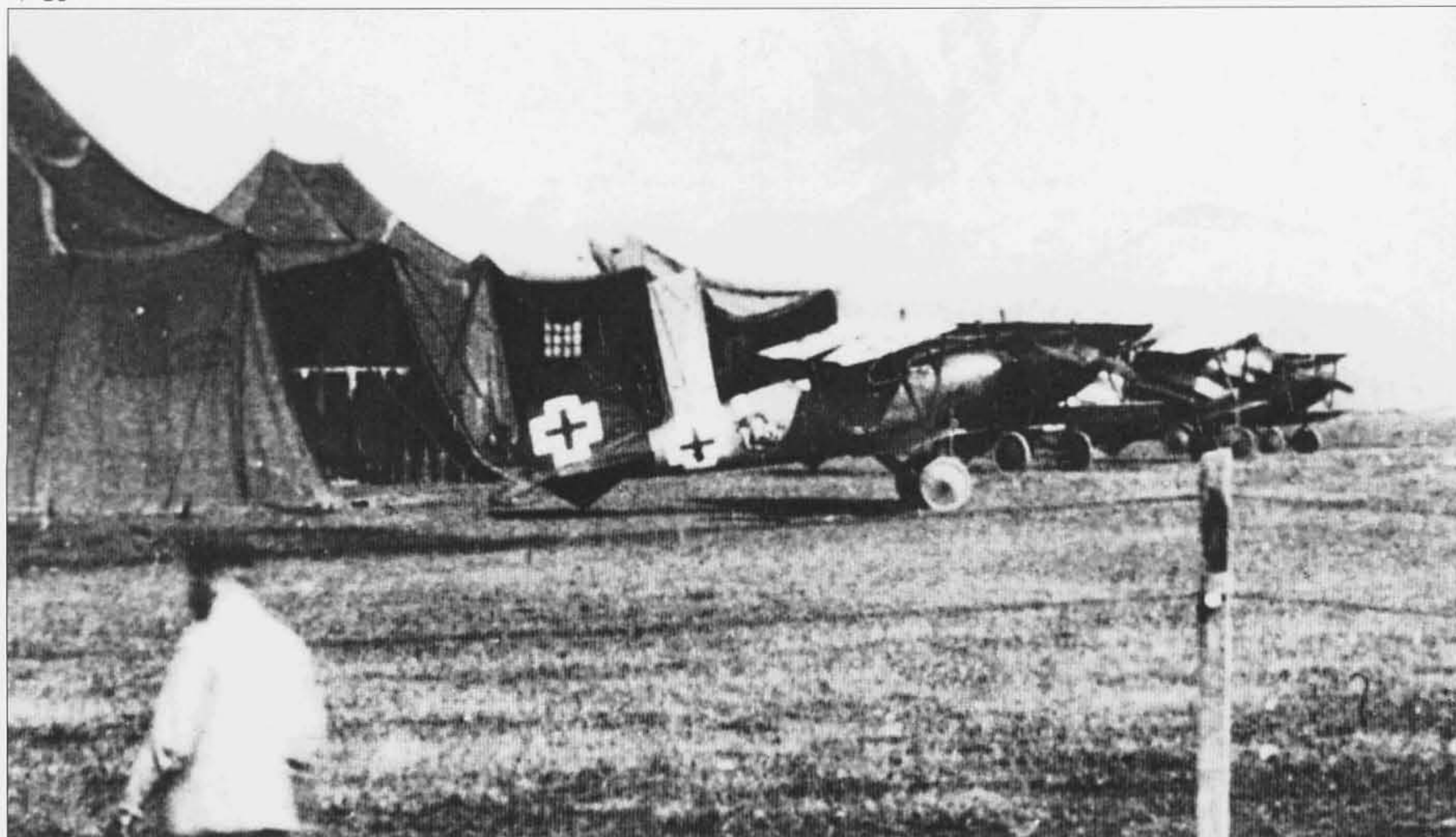
▼ 89



▲ 88

88. The almost certain inspiration for Flashar's marking, a loose translation would be: 'This is the way to peace - our enemies want it so! therefore subscribe to the war loan!'

89. Somewhat indistinct but full of interest is this detail enlargement of photo 82 with Flashar's 'Mailed Fist' in the foreground and one of Rumey's striped *Albatrosse* second from the right.



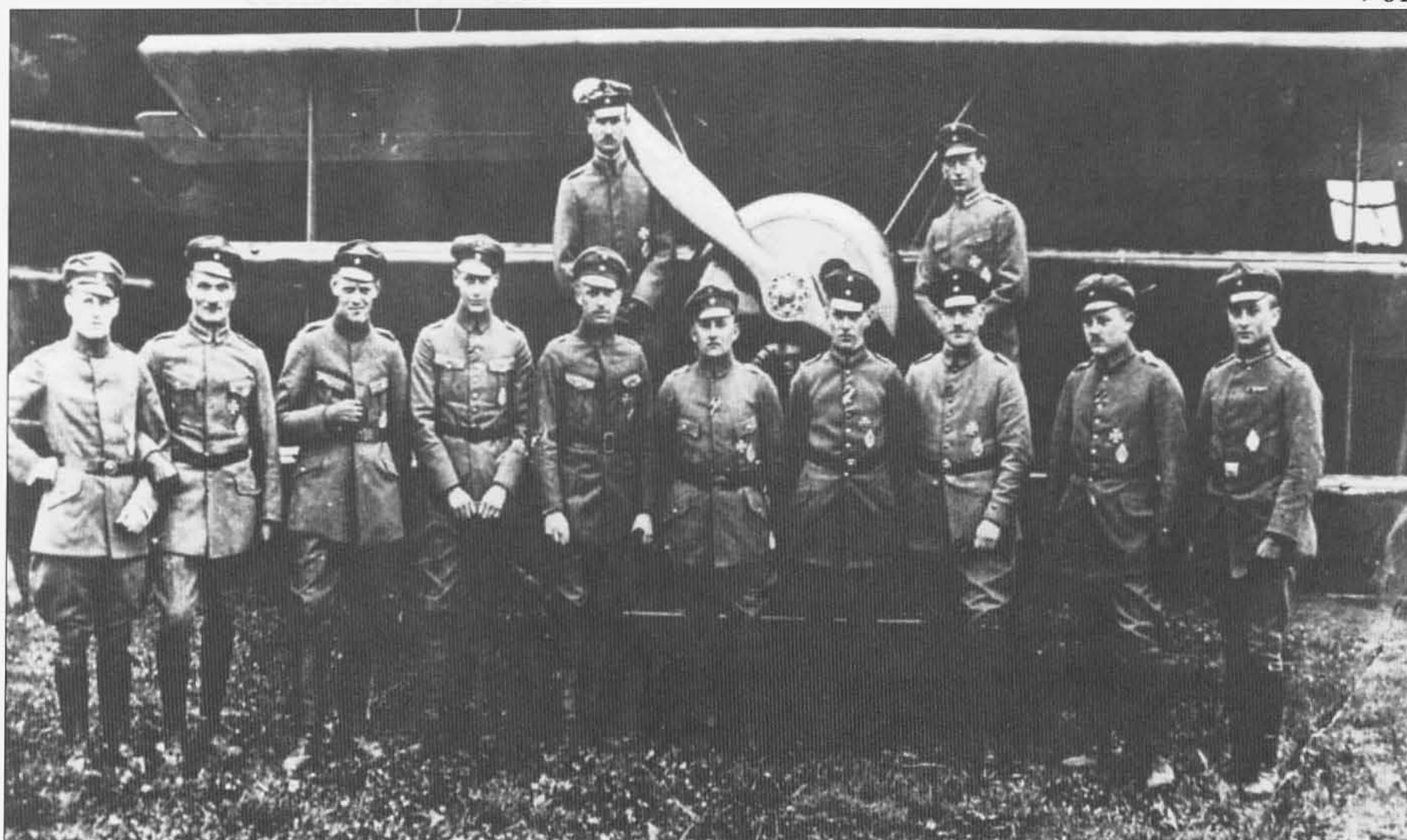


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90. Peaceful late 1918 panorama. The familiar *Edelweiss*-marked D.V of *Ltn.* Wilhelm Lehmann is at left, Rumey's D.V with its distinctive white tail stripes takes centre stage, and at right 'man-in-the-moon'-marked D.Va 5284/17 of Josef Mai. All three *Albatrosse* bear variations on the *Balkenkreuz* theme ...

91. The Fokker Triplanes arrive! A proud group of *Jasta 5* pilots poses with one of their new mounts in May 1918. Left to right: Schlömer, Rumey, von Hippel, Oppenhorst, Zettlemeyer, Flashar, Lehmann, Schaumberg, Rath, and Vogt. Standing on the aircraft's wheels are Mai and Könnecke.

▼ 91





▲ 92 ▼ 93





▲ 94

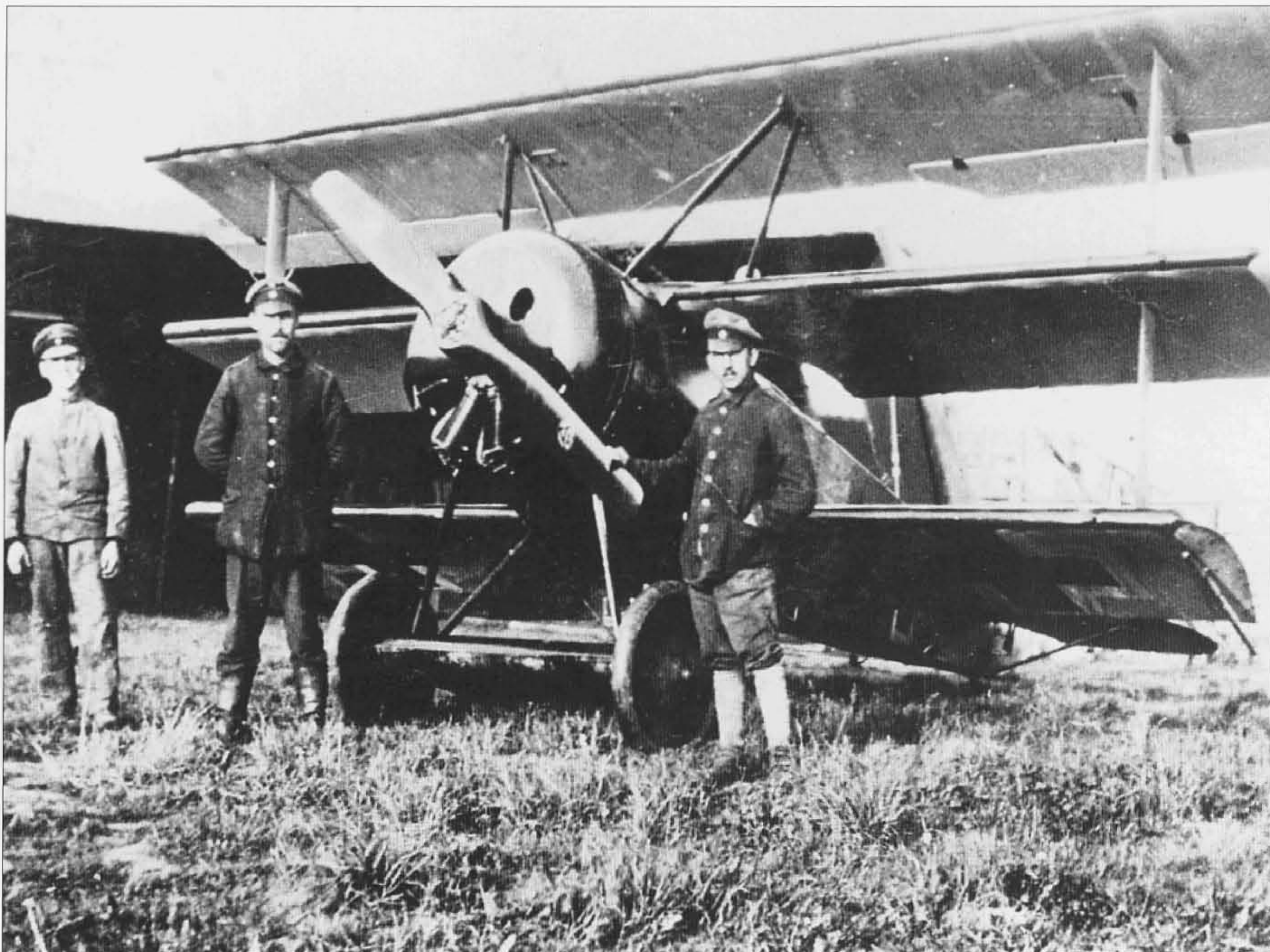
92. Josef Mai took over the heavily overpainted ex-*Jasta* 11 Dr.I 139/17.

93 and 94. Two views of Rumey's crash of Dr.I 558/17, formerly flown by von Hippel. Time is June 1918 and the leading edges and wing tips of all three wings have been painted a lighter colour above and a darker colour below.

95 and 96 (overleaf). Two views of what are thought to Ludwig Beckmann's old machine from *Jasta* 6. Alex Imrie suggested that the serial might have been 556/17. The white *Blitz* shows through probable green overpainting and the *Jasta* 6 tail stripes are also vaguely visible in spite of the pretty good covering properties of *Jasta* 5's green paint. The cross conversions have been done rather crudely.

▼ 95





▲ 96

being Lt. J E Reid in D6131 from No.80 Squadron, PoW. The following day Vzfw. Karl Treiber flamed a balloon at 1800 hrs. West of Fins. It was his first victory and he would play a significant role during the final days of *Jasta 5*. Other sources say this victory came on the following day. The next, 16 September, would be a banner day for Fritz Rumey because he achieved a triple, victories 35 through 37. They were a DH4 (or DH9) West of Villers Guislain at 0900 hrs., an SE5a at 1230 hrs. between Arras and Cambrai, also listed as Marquion, and a Camel in the same area five minutes later. Once again, the German reference to the first of these is quite specific and lists the victims as 2/Lt. F Anslow seriously wounded, and the observer, Sgt. L Murphy, killed. They were supposed to be from No.205 Squadron, but once again, Henshaw credits someone else, Hans Böhning of *Jasta 79*. On this day No.205 Squadron lost no fewer than four aircraft and were flying a mixture of DH4s, 9s, and 9As. The aircraft flown by Anslow and Murphy was D9250 regardless of who actually shot them down. Franks, *et al.*, suggest that Rumey's DH4 victim was actually an F2b from No.11 Squadron or alternatively, DH9 A7987, from No.57 Squadron, 2/Lts. J P Ferreira and L B Simmonds, both killed. Rumey's Camel victory was a No.3 Squadron machine, F5958, flown by Lt. J R Montgomery, also killed. No attribution can be made for his SE5a, but with the numbers of aircraft lost by the British this day, 20 in all, his claim was probably legitimate. Amazingly, Rumey repeated his triple the very next day on three separate patrols! An SE5a over Rumilly-en-Cambrésis at 0905 hrs., and Camels Northwest and Southwest of Cambrai at 1300 hrs. and 1910 hrs., respectively. These last two are also listed as between Arras and Cambrai for the former, and between Cambrai and Bapaume for the latter, neither being very precise. The SE5a was E4053 from No.40 Squadron, its pilot 2/Lt. F W King made PoW, this according to Henshaw who also attributes his evening victory as F2130 from No.46 Squadron, its pilot Lt. H Toulmin, MC, being killed. According to one or another Franks, *et al.* reference, his SE5a victim was

either Sgt. A Jex or Sgt. F S Thompson, both lost this day from No.84 Squadron. In the evening action Josef Mai also scored a victory over a Camel at 1912 hrs. over the lines. It fell between Bus and Hermies. This apparently was 2/Lt. C E Usher-Summers in F6226, also from No.46 Squadron, made PoW. These were Rumey's 38th and Mai's 27th victories (although Mai's 26th would be scored on 21 September and be credited first). The following day, 18 September, saw Vzfw. Treiber obtain his second victory at 1540 hrs. over a balloon between Tincourt-Bouchy and Longavesne.

A morning patrol on 20 September had *Jasta 5* tangling with Bristol Fighters from No.20 Squadron. *Oberleutnant* Schmidt claimed one at Fresnoy-le-Grand at 1037 hrs. and *Uffz.* Leicht another three minutes later at Croix-Fonsomme. Although both were confirmed as their 14th and 2nd victories, respectively, No.20 Squadron lost only one aircraft that day, E2158, Lt. A R Strachan and 2/Lt. D M Calderwood both killed. This would appear to be another case of double claiming. Mai's 27th occurred the next day, an F2b at 1840 hrs. over Montcouvez Ferme (listed elsewhere as Le Catelet). This was probably DH4 A8089 from No.205 Squadron, the crew Lt. A N Hyde and 2/Lt. W W Harrison, both killed. On 23 September Rumey claimed a Dolphin at 1815 hrs. at Buissy-Baralle. This was No.87 Squadron's D3741 whose pilot, Lt. F W Goodman was wounded, the combat also being listed as near Quéant.

The 24 September was a very busy day for *Jasta 5*. During a morning patrol they claimed no fewer than three victories; Rumey at 0820 hrs. South of Buissy-Baralle, Schmidt at 0830 hrs. at Rumaucourt, and Leicht at the same time North of Hamel or

97 and 98. Two additional ex-*Jasta 6* triplanes operated by *Jasta 5*. Although neither shows a great deal and both are of mediocre quality, they are previously unpublished and document more variation in cross styles. Oppenhorst is in the cockpit in *Photo 101*, and possibly the other as well.



▲ 97 ▼ 98





▲ 99

Bellone, all the victims being SE5as, all unidentified, although the British lost several SE5as that day whose victors cannot be established. None of these is in a cluster of three, however, and the times and places only agree in a very general way. Taking off in Fokker D.VII 898/18 for an evening patrol at 1740 hrs., Josef Mai quickly attacked a DH9 from No.49 Squadron one kilometre South of Beauvois-en-Cambrésis and brought it down within sight of his old aerodrome at Boistrancourt. Although No.49 Squadron had a bad day with three killed, three wounded, and three PoW, none of these was the victim that Mai claimed. It seems more likely that his victim was actually DH4 A8088 from No.57 Squadron, the single crewman listed, Lt. F G Pym, being 'OK', but there are huge differences in time, morning *versus* late afternoon not the least of them. On the 25th Treiber downed a Spad XIII at 1800 hrs. two kilometres South of St. Quentin. The British lost no Spads that day, and Franks, *et al.*, state the claim was for a Spad two-seater, but was actually a Breguet 14 crewed by Adj. Fabiani and S/Lt. Lormail, both missing. On 26 September, Rumey claimed a double and Treiber also added a victory. Rumey's first was at 1410 hrs. over a DH4 at Gouzeaucourt. Treiber's does not have a time listed, but was supposed to also have been a DH4 two kilometres East of Le Pavé, so presumably this was the same action. There were a lot of Airco-built victims this day, No.57 Squadron losing three DH4s and No.99 Squadron lost seven DH9s, another being lost by another Independent Force Squadron, No.104. Henshaw does not correlate victors and victims, but Franks, *et al.*, state these were in fact DH4s from No.57 Squadron. Rumey's second victory of the day came at 1805 hrs. at Gouzeaucourt over an F2b. This may have been from 'L' Flight, but there appears to be a time conflict once again. This double gave Fritz Rumey a victory total of 44.

The death of Fritz Rumey

When *Ltn.* Fritz Rumey took off from the airfield at Villers-Sire-Nicole at 1140 hrs. on 27 September 1918, it is highly unlikely that he realized that he was Germany's highest-scoring active ace. It was true, nevertheless, because with 44 victories and



▲ 100

99 and 100. The new and the old, the formal and the informal. A fresh-looking Otto Könnecke in a candid view the print dated 23 November 1917 and another of him thought to have been taken in the summer 1918. Although he is forcing a smile, his face is lined and reflects his many months of combat.

Ernst Udet having been wounded the day before and *hors de combat* for the duration, no one still flying in the *Luftstreikräfte* had more. Josef Jacobs would set a torrid scoring pace in October and end the war with a greater number, but he was about a dozen behind Rumey at this time.

Rumey's distinction would not last long. At 1203 hrs. he may have scored a victory over a Camel East of Marquion. As combat continued he is supposed to have collided with an SE5a piloted by Lt. G E R Lawson from No.32 Squadron, Lawson's undercarriage ripping the top of Rumey's upper wing. His Fokker uncontrollable, Rumey baled out. According to one account his parachute snagged on the aircraft and tore. Another version states that it simply did not open. In either case Fritz Rumey plunged to his death between the lines near Neuville-St. Remy, Northwest of Cambrai (and not that far from the scene of many happy days at Boistrancourt). The British recovered and buried his body. There are several discrepancies of time, place, and aircraft type in reports of his death. For example, there were no fewer than three 'Neuvelles' within *Jasta 5*'s operational area. Neuville-sur-Escaut was near their northern limit and is very close to where Hans Berr had fallen more than a year and a half previously. There was also Neuville-Bourjonval that is more reasonable, but Rumey's victory report at Marquion would have put him right on top of Neuville-St. Remy, and very close to Cambrai when he fell. *Jasta 5* pilots were clear in claiming Camels as victims in this combat, and it is unlikely both Camels and SE5as were involved that closely in the action. Also, there is a two-hour discrepancy being Lawson's incident and Rumey's fall. A further confusing element is Mai's account that says the structural collapse of Rumey's wing resulted from excessive speed in pursuing his victim, rather than collision. Henshaw

suggests Rumeys victim may have been Lt. P McCraig, killed in Camel B6421 from No.54 Squadron and Franks, *et al.*, concur. In the same action Mai claimed a Camel, flamed, at 1210 hrs. North of Sauchy-Cauchy. This was possibly another double claim. Regardless of the details of his victim or the exact cause of his death, *Jasta 5*'s greatest ace was gone, breaking up the 'Golden Triumvirate'. On two successive days, the top German ace was taken out of combat. Nevertheless, scoring continued at a hectic pace. Rumeys death must have had a huge impact on Könnecke and Mai. By this stage in the war it would have been impossible for German pilots to not believe they would perish in the conflict. To men like these it would have been a great surprise when the guns fell silent and they were still alive. In his diary Mai refers to himself in the third person as always, but now it is as 'Lt. Mai.' He was promoted this day and the notice must have arrived before they took off. He also records that the paperwork for his *Pour le Mérite* was submitted on this day as well. Later in the day Schmidt achieved victory over an F2b at 1550 hrs. at Cattenières. This may have been D8089 from No.22 Squadron lost about the right time and place, the crew, 2/Lt. G J ? Smith and Lt. G B Shum, both surviving as PoWs. Still later, Karl Treiber became *Jasta 5*'s last 'ace' when he shot down an SE5a at 1750 hrs. West of Cambrai. This may have been B8355 from No.32 Squadron, its pilot, 2/Lt. C F Cawley made PoW. British air losses were huge this day and on the ground the final assault on the 'Hindenburg Line' was being pressed. Allied losses

101 and 102. The same comparison again, this time with Fritz Rumeys. The first Sanke postcard is based on a photograph of him probably taken about April 1918 at Cappy - based on the Nissen huts in the background. Rumeys has his almost ubiquitous grin. The second was probably taken in August 1918, soon after the award of his *Pour le Mérite*. Perhaps it is only for the purpose of the formal photograph, but he looks uncharacteristically sombre in this late Sanke postcard.

▼ 101



on the ground were correspondingly heavy, demonstrating that the Germans, on land and in the air, could not stop the onslaught, but they were still capable of inflicting punishing losses.

Bad weather kept *Jasta 5* on the ground on 28 September, but they were active again on 29 September. During a morning patrol *Uffz.* Treiber claimed a DH4 Northeast of Caudry at 0845 and *Ltn.* Mai an F2b in flames five minutes later East of the same village. According to Franks, *et al.*, Treiber's victim may have been D3172 of No.27 Squadron crewed by 2/Lts. H S Thomas and T Brown, both killed. Henshaw lists one victim, an F2b, F5814 from No.11 Squadron, crewed by 2/Lt. T T Smith and Lt. J L Bromley, both killed. Several more Bristol fighters from other units were lost in the same area, but this may be another example of double claiming. In any case this was Mai's 30th and last victory of the war and closed out *Jasta 5*'s scoring for the month. 'Black September' had certainly been that for the Allies who lost 560 aircraft during the month according to Franks, *et al.* The Germans claimed 721 victories for the period, a rather modest ratio of overclaiming when compared with Allied claims of 1180. Actual German losses are not known, but may have been as few as 107, certainly not more than twice that. These were losses the Germans could not afford simply because they could not be replaced. During the month of September the very heaviest air fighting fell to *JG III* whose four *Staffeln* made a staggering 120 claims. Given that *Jasta 36* was essentially without aircraft before the end of the month, the results are stunning. The highest number of claims for the month by any *Jagdstaffel* was by *JG III*'s *Jasta 2 (B)* with 46 for the month. The second highest total was *Jasta 5*'s 37 claims. Clearly, the level of performance by *Jasta 5* during 'Black September' was on a par with their earlier distinguished record.

October-November 1918: Defeat of the *Luftstreitkräfte*

The situation was rapidly disintegrating for the Germans by the

▼ 102

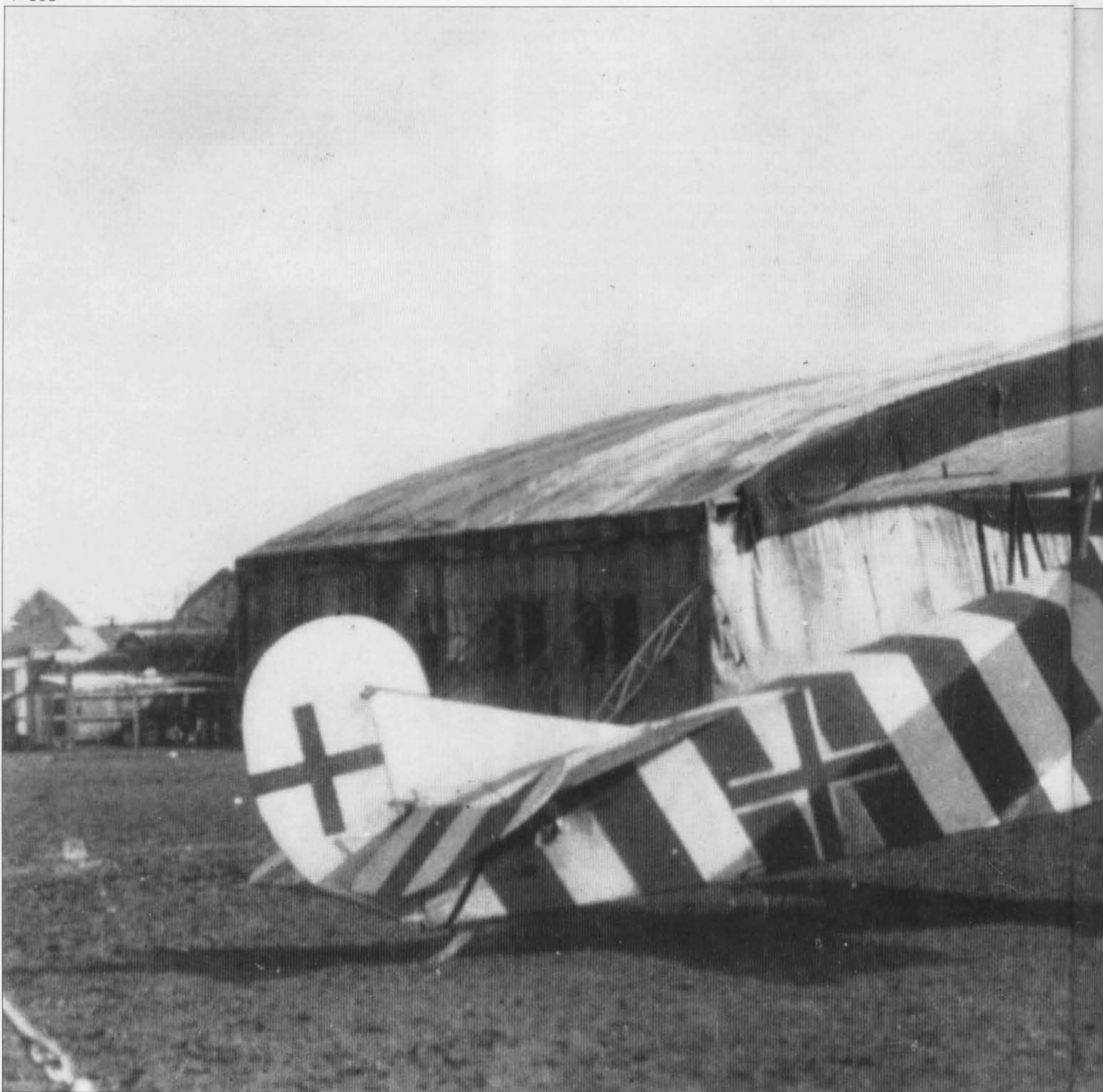


beginning of October. They were being routed on the ground in all sectors and falling back at an alarming rate. Shortages of fuel were especially limiting for the air units, many *Jastas* having just enough to be in the air at most a few hours a week. Nevertheless, as turmoil and chaos reigned, elite units like *Jasta 5* continued to do their job to the best of their ability. *Oberleutnant* Schmidt shot down SE5a B8427 from No.1 Squadron killing the pilot, Lt. W Joffe DSO at 1855 hrs. on 1 October at Ferme de Pavillion. According to one source Mai was wounded in air combat on October 3, and went to hospital. He states he received a '*Schmitte*' (*sic!*), best translated as a 'nick', on 6 October. He only says that in his summary, the more detailed diary merely says he saw *Oblt.* Schmidt bring down an RE8 from No.59 Squadron that day (take-off at 1155 hrs. victory at 1220 hrs. East of Esnes) and that it was Schmidt's 19th victory. This can't be matched with any known loss, RE8 or other, and it's quite possible the date is wrong. It looks strikingly similar to another entry for 6 October. Record-keeping was also rapidly falling

▼ 103

apart. This was Mai's last combat flight, an amazing total of 660 combat sorties totaling 735 hours. Stated another way, he flew 132,300 km during those flights, more than three times the Earth's circumference!

Franks, *et al.*, credit Schmidt with an RE8 victory on 8 October as well. This was supposed to have been north of Honcourt, E229 from No.59 Squadron, 2/Lts. J C G Drummond and P Chavasse, both killed. On 10 October Schmidt achieved another victory, this over a balloon. At various unrecorded dates and times (but clearly mostly in October) he is supposed to have scored an additional six victories bringing his final total to 24. The records simply aren't there to tell more about these. Könnecke is supposed to have brought down an SE5a one kilometre South-east of Le Cateau at 1745 hrs. on 18 October, and another double over two F2bs on 23 October when Leicht bagged one. No matches can be made for these if the dates are even correct. Also unattributed victories, numbers 1 and 2 were scored by *Uffz.* Gustav Praclik during the month. On 25 October in a

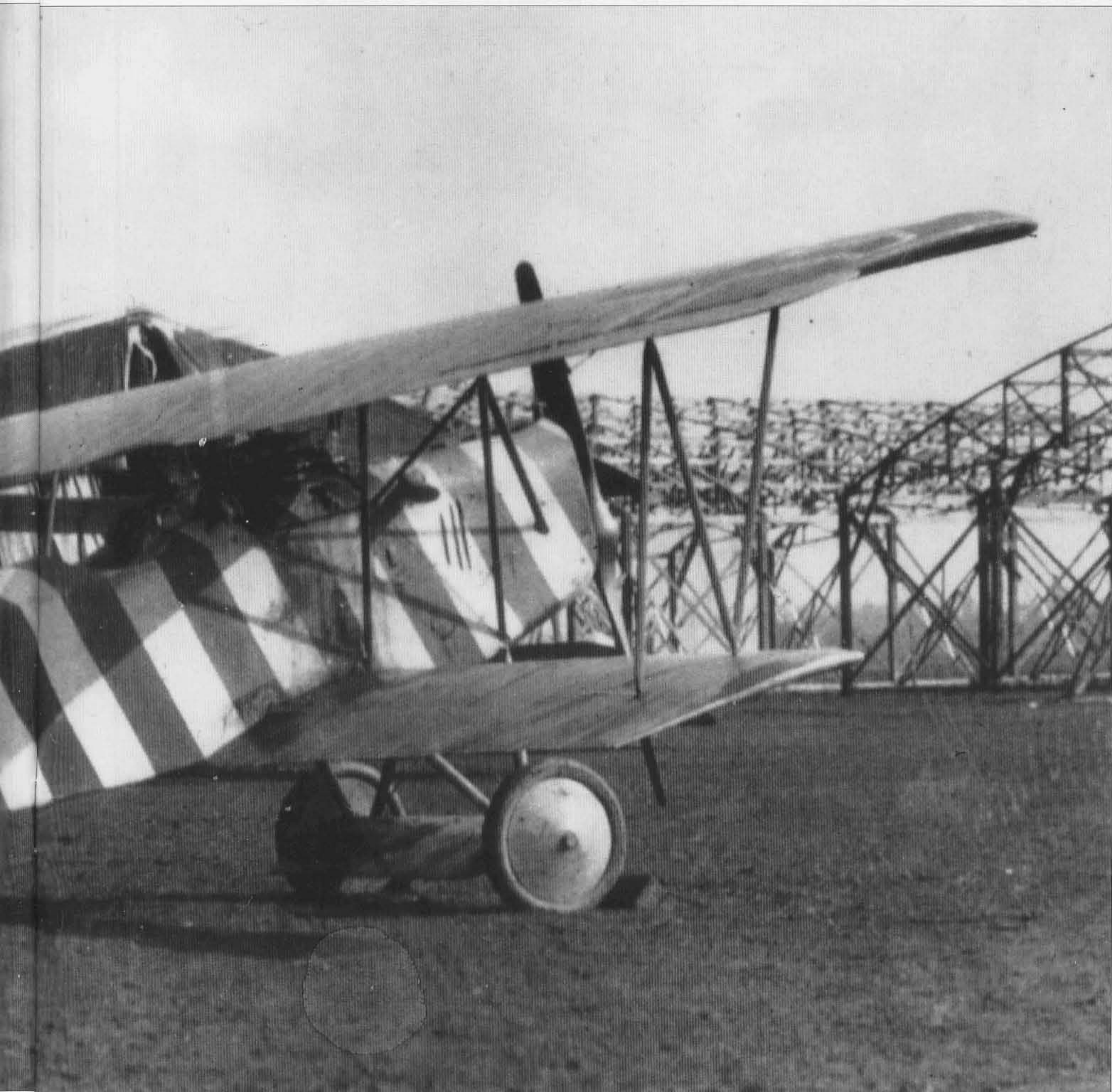


scrap with SE5as, Karl Treiber scored his seventh and apparently last victory, over Lt. L H Smith in E1279 or E1276 North of Mormal Wood at 1045 hrs. Smith was from No.60 Squadron and made PoW. In this same action Praclik had his Fokker D.VII hit and catch fire. He had a remarkable descent by parachute that saved his life, landing within German lines about 1100 hrs. He was protected during his descent by Treiber, and Praclik commented about the 'large T' on the fuselage sides of Treiber's Fokker. This is tough to square with the photograph of this machine unless the 'T' was inverted! Unfortunately, the lower wing masks the bottom of the marking.

On the first day of the last month of the 'War to End All Wars', Könnecke downed DH4 F1068 of No.25 Squadron, its occupants Lt. R G Dobeson and 2/Lt. F G Mills made PoW. It remained, appropriately enough, for *Ltn.* Otto Könnecke to score the last victory (that we know of anyway) for *Jasta* 5. This occurred on 4 November 1918 when he engaged and destroyed an SE5a over Mormal Wood at 1145 hrs. Henshaw suggests that Könnecke

misidentified his victim and that it actually was a DH4 from No.57 Squadron, A7652, crewed by Lt. A E Bournes and Capt. R Colville-Jones, both killed. Misidentifications were legion, but experienced pilots like Könnecke had fought the SE5as for over a year and knew them well. A more likely victim seems to have been E5963 from No.84 Squadron, the pilot, Sgt. A J Wing, was killed at this place at the right time. Indeed, Könnecke may have scored a double this day and his *Staffelführer* a victory as well. The following day *Jasta* 5 withdrew from the Valenciennes sector and effectively from the war as they moved to Cyembloux near Charleroi. They were officially disbanded at Breslau in December 1918. Thus passed into history one of the most successful fighter

103. Mai's striped D.VII, OAW-built 4598/18. This and the photo overleaf were probably taken in October 1918 and the diagonal bands were probably as much a tribute to his late comrade Fritz Rumey as they were a decoration or an attempt to create an optical illusion to thwart the aim of enemy gunners.





units of all time. They had flown and fought and scored and died, upholding the finest traditions that elite units maintain. The pity is that politicians start wars that brave young men must finish and that they must do so by shedding their blood whether in victory or defeat. The loss of men like Berr, Schneider, and Rumey, to select just three, are the losses that no nation should have to endure. Much as we are warmed by their skills and heroism, we must be terribly saddened by their loss.

104. Another young man who has been aged by the conflict, Josef Mai posing in front of his striped Fokker D.VII.

105. Gustav Praclik and D.VII after his remarkable parachute escape. This must have very near the end of the war because his recovery was slow. He described this photo as 'Hero in House Slippers'.

106. Karl Treiber with his Fokker D.VII supposedly marked with a large 'T' according to Praclik.



▲ 105 ▼ 106



Acknowledgements and sources

To the best of my knowledge every photograph used in these publications is available from the Ferko collection in the History of Aviation Collection at the University of Texas at Dallas. Many were derived directly from that source. Others, whether originating there or elsewhere, were very kindly loaned to me by Greg VanWyngarden and I gratefully acknowledge his help. The collection at UTD also contains much textual material that was invaluable and the staff and volunteers there have been most helpful and cooperative during the several trips I made there during this research quest. Over the years, Peter Grosz has been very generous in loaning photographs for various projects we have done and that included a great deal of useful information before the Ferko collection was acquired. Crucial to the project has been the recruitment of additional pairs of eyes to help in discovering those tiny bits of information in photos that might otherwise escape detection. Steadfast and of tremendous help throughout has been the assistance of William T ('Ty') Smith in this connection. Latterly another pair of eyes belonging to Dr. Phillip Anz-Meador have assisted greatly in this work. Doug

Fant very kindly improved my translation of Hans Berr's field order of 1 April 1917 and deserves special thanks. Dr. François Portier assisted in obtaining French maps and finding locations on them.

Published sources that were used are too numerous to mention but include various issues of the original *Cross and Cockade*, the later *Cross and Cockade International* and *Over the Front*. The various works by Franks and his team of co-authors that prepared *Jasta Pilots*, *Bloody April...Black September*, and others have been extremely useful. Henshaw's *The Sky Their Battlefield* was very helpful and extensively used to cross-check German victory claims. Many other written sources were used and it simply is impossible to list them all. Others have made contributions to this effort and I acknowledge one and all who contributed. Finally, it is appropriate to thank Ray Rimell for his patience as this project that looked like a 'simple' and 'quick' effort to write up 'what I already knew' dragged on for more than seven years. Much as I may have known when I began the project, I have learned a lot more during its execution. □

ERRATA TO VOLUME ONE:

"hangar" for "hangar" throughout • p.5 "la Forêt de" • p.13 "Boistrancourt Sucrerie" • p.49 Bäumer to *Jasta 2* on 28 June 1917, not 28 June 1918.

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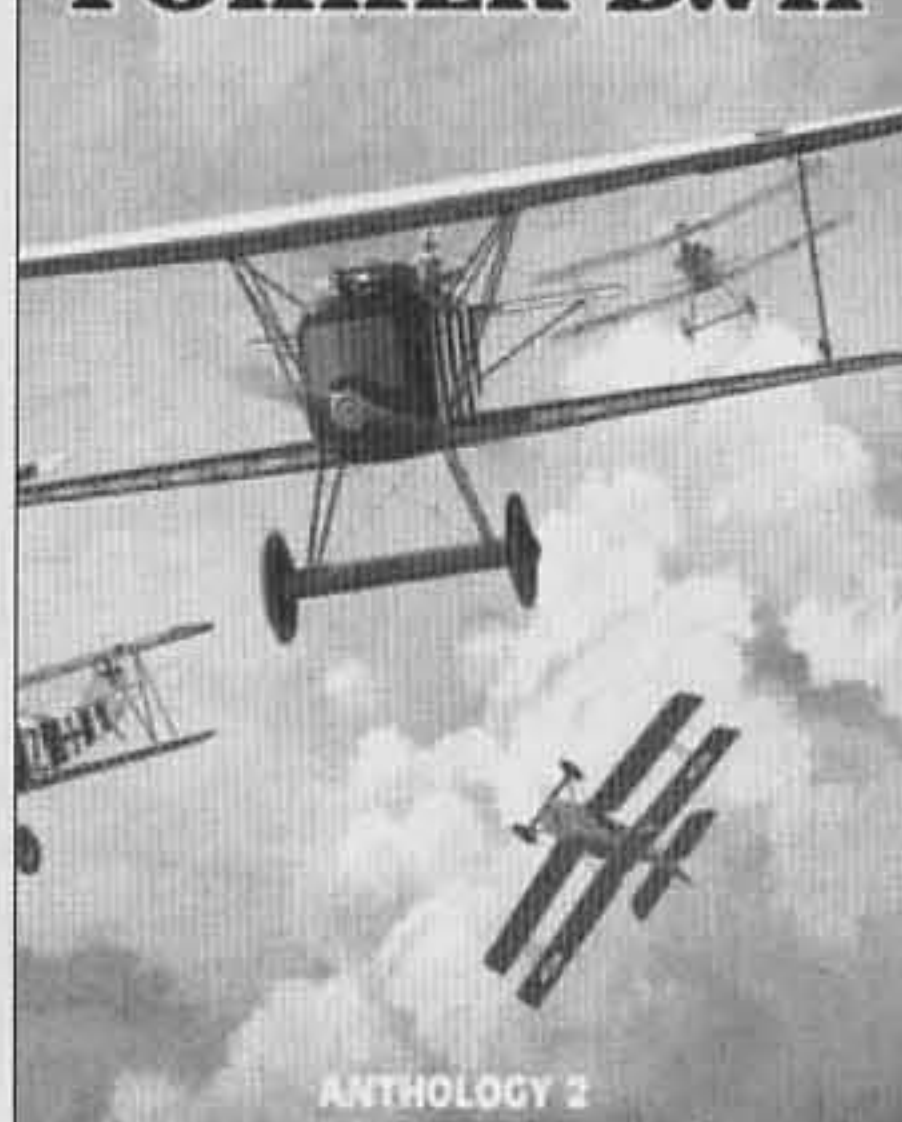
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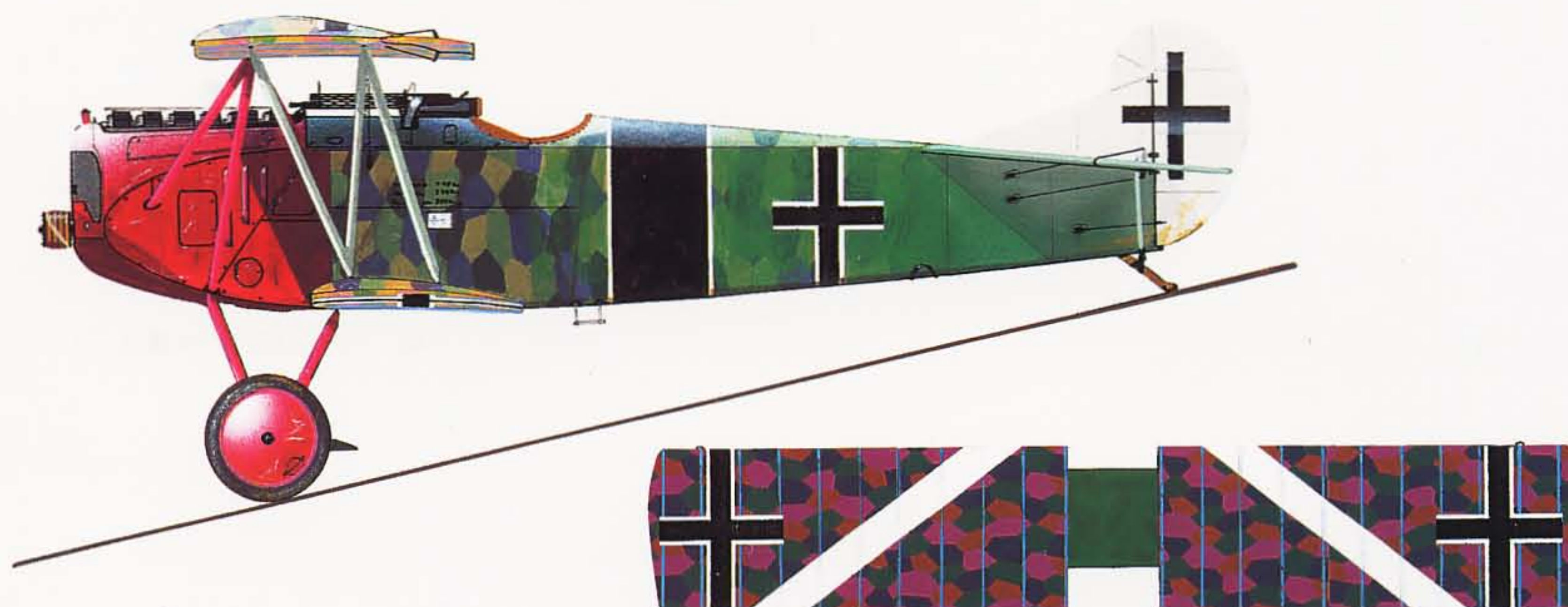
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55). FOKKER D.VII (OAW), Summer 1918.



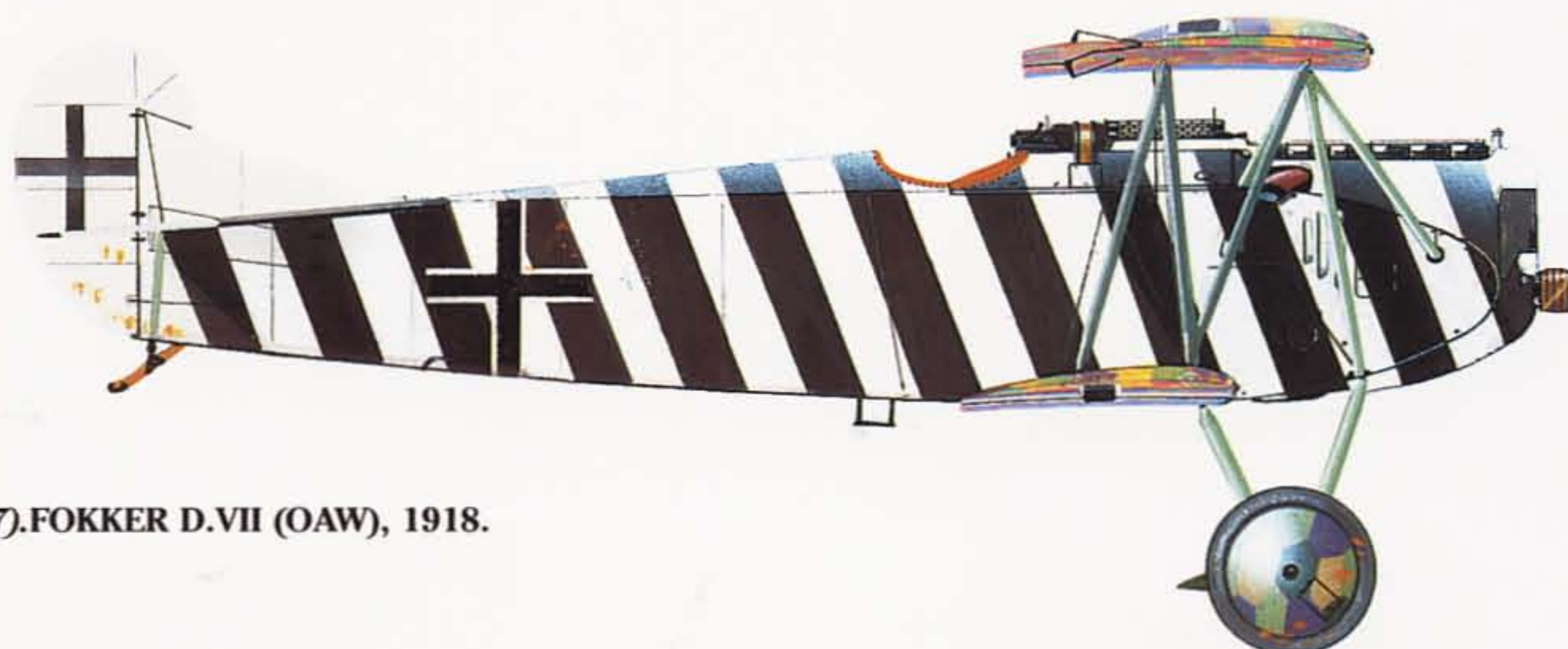
56). FOKKER D.VII (OAW), Summer 1918.



56A). LOWER WING DETAIL



57A). TAIL DETAIL



57). FOKKER D.VII (OAW), 1918.



58). FOKKER D.VII (OAW), 1918.



58A). ALT. MARKING



59A). PLAN VIEW.

59). ALBATROS D.Va 5639/17, 1917 - 1918.

59B). UNDERSIDE.

