

9. Staffel/Jagdgeschwader 26

**The Battle of Britain Photo Album
of Luftwaffe Bf 109 Pilot Willy Fronhöfer**

Compiled by John Vasco



A SCHIFFER MILITARY HISTORY BOOK

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of Luftwaffe Bf 109 Pilot Willy Fronhöfer**

Compiled by John Vasco

Book design by Robert Biondi.

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Introduction

This work, of completely original photographs from Willy Fronhöfer, was made possible by the generous co-operation of Dave Brocklehurst and Mike Llewellyn, MBE, of the Kent Battle of Britain Museum in Hawkinge. The photographs were deposited with them some time ago and put fully at their disposal for the benefit of the museum. Upon seeing them, I felt that the only way to do the photographs full justice was in book form, with the additional caveat of the author proceeds from the book going to assist the ongoing upkeep of the museum. I am therefore grateful that this opportunity has arisen for this private collection of photographs to be made available to those with a keen interest in the aviation history of the Battle of Britain.

What is unusual about this work is that it is not simply a long procession of various views of several aircraft (although there are undoubtedly many who would wish to see that!). Instead, it is a short photo-history of one Luftwaffe fighter *Staffel*, predominantly showing the Battle of Britain period, up to the point when Willy Fronhöfer belly-landed his Bf 109 E-4, Yellow 10, W. Nr. 1184, at Jubilee Hall Farm, Ulcombe, on 31st August 1940 following combat with Pilot Officer Colin Gray of 54 Squadron. The photographs record, therefore, not only aircraft, but personalities of the *Staffel*, both flying and ground personnel; scenes of daily life; the devastation found as the *Staffel* advanced through occupied territory; the enemy aircraft found destroyed or abandoned, and a population made transient by the horror of war. It is a unique, albeit brief, insight into a very small section of the German war machine as it enjoyed unparalleled success in its push across western Europe in the spring and summer of 1940. I am grateful to Dave Brocklehurst and Mike Llewellyn, MBE, for making this possible.

9. *Staffel*, Jagdgeschwader 26

9. *Staffel*'s formation in September 1939 included a complement of personnel drafted in from II. *Gruppe* *Zerstörergeschwader* 26. The first *Staffelkapitän* was Gerhard Schöpel. The *Staffel* moved to Essen-Mülheim in November 1939, and were stationed there when the western campaign commenced on 10th May 1940. From then on the *Staffel* led what could be called almost a nomadic existence with frequent changes of base. 13th May saw a move to Mönchen-Gladbach, then to Peer on the 17th, Beauvechain on 19th, and Chièvres on the 27th. June saw a move to La Capelle on the 4th, Les Thilliers on the 13th, Villacoublay on the 17th, and back to Mönchen-Gladbach on the 22nd. From there they moved to Döberitz on 1st July, and finally Caffiers on 21st July, their base for operations against England during the summer of 1940 before moving to Abbeville-Drucat in November.

During his service with 9th *Staffel* in 1940, Willy Fronhöfer lodged claims three aerial victories. On 15th May he claimed a Mureaux 115 over Löwen; during the Dunkirk evacuation he claimed a Spitfire west of Dunkirk, and on 15th August in the early evening he claimed a Hurricane in the Folkestone area. His tussle with Colin Gray on 31st August however resulted not in a further victory claim, but a long period of captivity. Willy Fronhöfer was one of the fortunate members of his *Staffel* to survive the war; many of his comrades would not in the Battle of Britain and the campaigns to come.

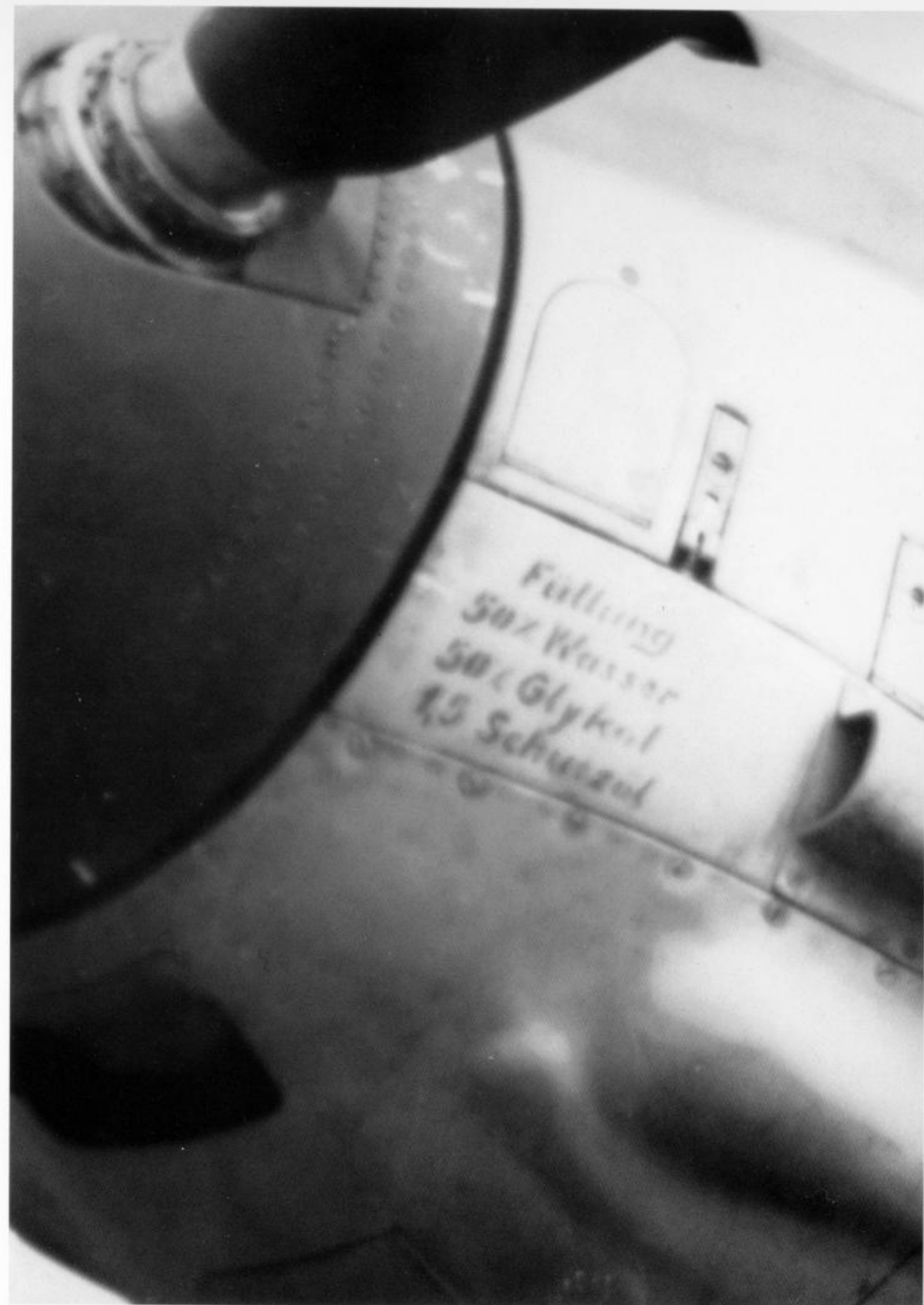
The Photographs

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Population	144

Aircraft

This section shows several aircraft of 9. *Staffel*. Of particular interest, noted in recent publications concerning the *Staffel*, are the two different styles of the 9. *Staffel* emblem. The earlier 'Hellhound' emblem, in simple form with no embellishments, can be seen. Also, darker streaks can be seen on another variation of the early emblem. The later version shows a much fuller-bodied Hellhound, sometimes outlined, sometimes with demarcation lines between the wing and the body. Speculation abounds with regard to the colours employed. Recent commentary leans towards the emblem being in both red and black, at different times, and there is sufficient evidence in the photographs to support both contentions. On the later version, the mouth, tongue and ears have more intricate detail, and the odd photograph shows the use of more colours in the added detail. The *Geschwader* emblem of the stylised 'S' appears on the port side of all of the aircraft with the early style camouflage of light blue up the majority of the fuselage side. However, one photograph, of 'Yellow 3', with mottle down the port fuselage side shows no *Geschwader* emblem carried. The starboard side views also do not show 100% conformity. Whereas most views show the *Geschwader* emblem on the starboard side when the photographs permits, 'Yellow 8' that ended up in a hedge quite clearly does not carry the *Geschwader* emblem on the starboard side. Another interesting marking is the instructions for groundcrew ahead of the exhausts on the port side on some aircraft: 'Fullung 50% Wasser 50% Glykol 1,5 Schutzöl'. It was not a common occurrence for this kind of instruction to be seen on operational Bf 109s. As would be expected, the photographs show the fitment of both machine guns and 20mm. cannon in the wings, and also the two styles of cockpit canopy seen in 1940.

























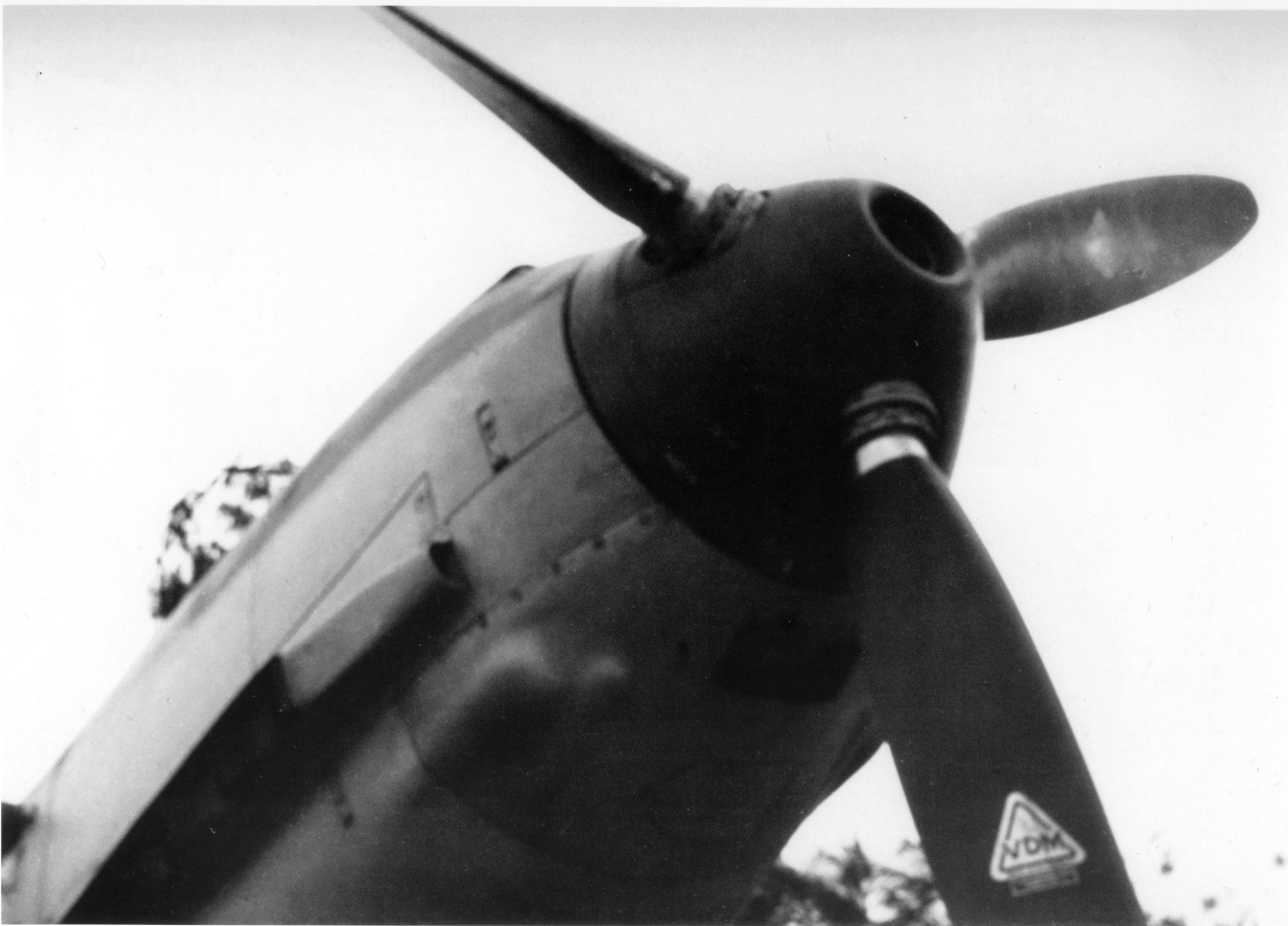
















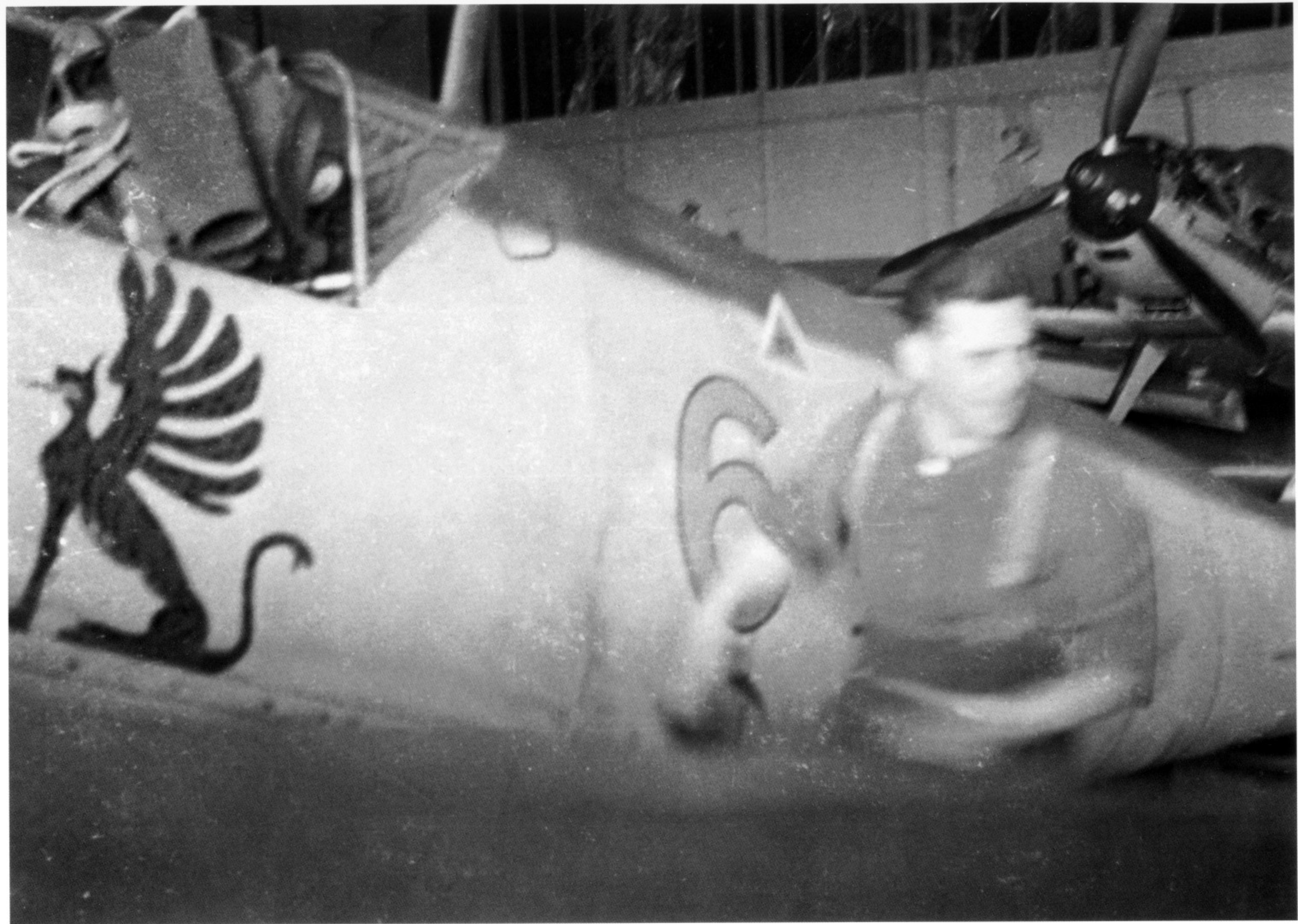
































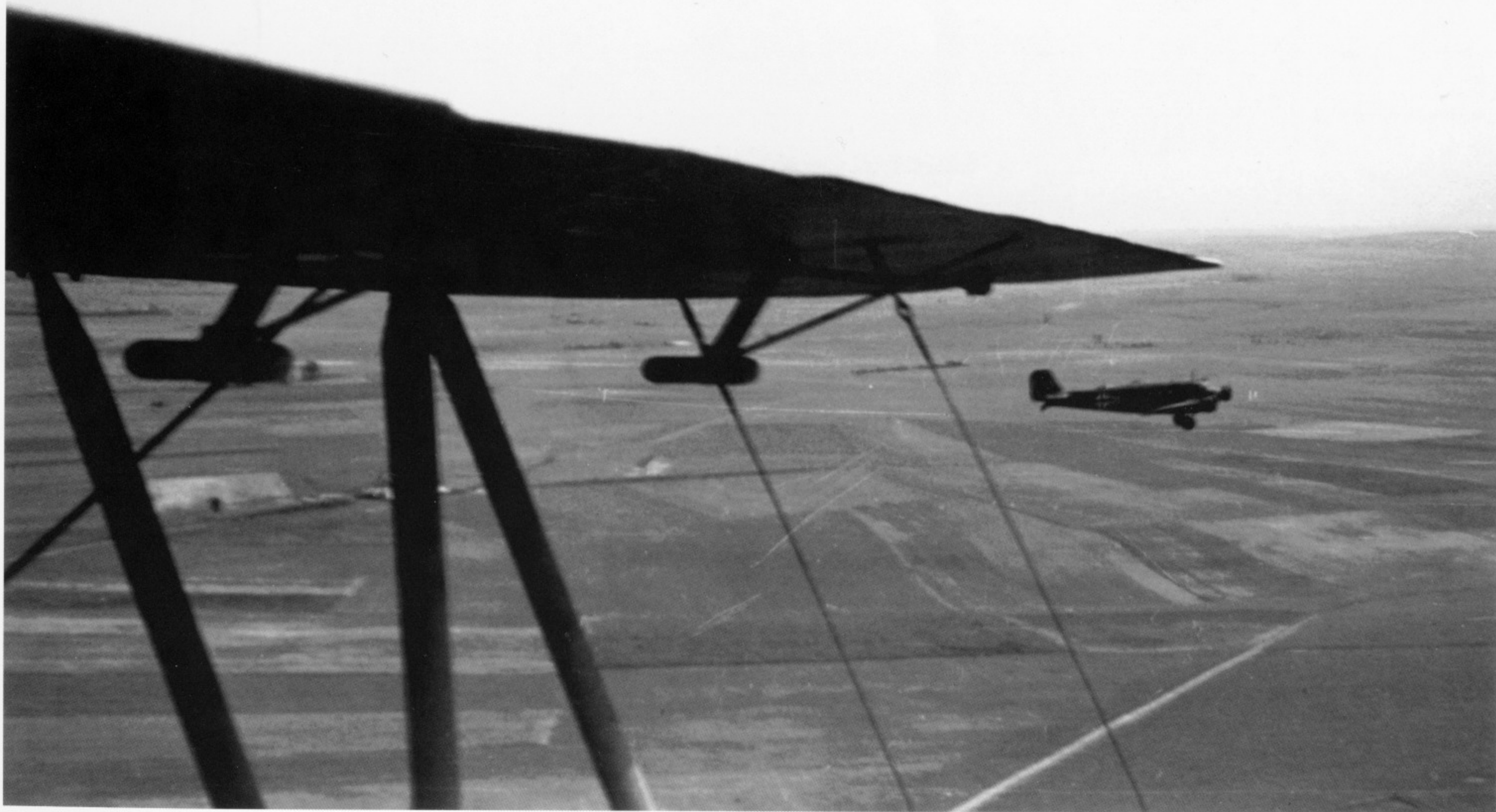














Buildings

This short section shows some of the damage inflicted on cities during the western campaign. The photographs speak for themselves and need no further comment.











