



PZL/IAR P.11F

ROMANIAN FIGHTER

MICHAŁ SKAWIŃSKI



No. 75



No. 114



No. 65

COLOUR OPTIONS FOR IBG MODELS KIT **No. 72521**

” *The three colour options included in the IBG Models P.11F kit (no. 72521) not only portray the evolution of the Romanian camouflages in the early WW2, but are also inextricably linked with the difficult history of this country in the period of 1939-41. First two options come from the period when Romania was still considered part of the Allied camp, although officially trying to maintain neutrality – an effort that ended up with significant territorial losses on behalf of the Soviet Union, Hungary and Bulgaria. The third option comes from the period when Romania was already strongly embedded in the Axis camp.*

Camouflages and markings of the period are not well covered in the references published so far. Some of the results of research are described below, nevertheless this topic definitely requires a separate treatment. It should also be noted that very significant effort was put into making kit decals as accurate and detailed as possible.



I would like to warmly thank Dan Antoniu and Horia Stoica for all the help, guidance, knowledge, thoughts and documentation shared from their vast archives. Many thanks and appreciation is also due to Adam Andrzejewski of IBG Models for his infinite patience to my never-ending flow of corrections and improvements. And delays. And to my friend Marek Możdżeń, for always being there with his opinions when I'm in doubt. This publication would not be possible without all of you! I would also like to thank all the Cartula.ro users who took part in the voting for one of the colour options in the box. All the hard work that was put into reconstruction of the camouflage of P.11F No. 114 is dedicated to you!

Michał Skawiński

PZL/I.A.R. P.11F No. 75

FLOTILA 1 VÂNĂTOARE / PILOT ELEV T.R. NICOLAE ROTARU / DECEMBER 1939

First option shows an airplane in typical camouflage and markings of the first months of World War 2. At that time Romania found itself between a German hammer and a Soviet anvil. Although allied to France and having British and French guarantees of independence, it was obvious for Bucharest that none of these countries were able or in fact willing to provide Romania with meaningful military assistance – as they were not in case of Czechoslovakia and Poland. Bucharest tried to officially remain neutral, although it was still sympathizing with the Allied cause and especially with its interwar close ally, Poland – Romania was the main route for Polish military personnel evacuation to France in 1939-40.

At that time Romania was rapidly expanding its fighter force using both newly-acquired Heinkel He 112 and interned PZL P.11c airplanes, nevertheless P.11Fs still constituted the backbone of the air defence. This particular P.11F crashed during landing on Iași airfield on 2nd December

1939. The pilot Elev T.R. (Termen Redus) Nicolae Rotaru tried to shorten the landing due to the fact that the airfield was filled with other aircraft. The undercarriage hit a knoll and the airplane made a hard touchdown, damaging the right landing gear and a wingtip. Subsequently no. 75 was repaired and enjoyed a very long career, being among the very last PZL fighters retired from service. It was finally struck off charge only in October 1948.

In December 1939 the aircraft still carried the pre-war paint scheme, very similar to the one used on Polish PZL fighters. Top surfaces, including wrap-around fuselage and all struts, were in khaki brown, with the undersurfaces of the wing and horizontal tail in light blue-grey. At the time Romanian cockades were put only on wings, with the bottom ones large and placed symmetrically and the top ones small and off to the left of the airplane (similar to the practice used in Poland). Airplane number (75) was placed both on the fuselage in white and on the rudder in black.



First of a series of P.11F No. 75 photos taken after the accident on 2nd December 1939. These shots were made using orthochromatic film (that was by far the most popular type in Romania at the time). One can see characteristic features of it - reds and yellows are much darker than in reality, with the blues being much lighter. It is perfectly visible on the national insignia on the wings and rudder. Note the asymmetrical location of cockades and smooth, glossy paintwork finish. At the time P.11F did not carry the radio or antenna wires, although an unpainted (most likely ceramic) antenna lead-in insulator is visible just above number 5 on the fuselage. A very interesting element is the unpainted, natural metal ring around the outlet under the cockpit opening – a feature seen on many P.11F. (Dan Antoniu/Horia Stoica collection)

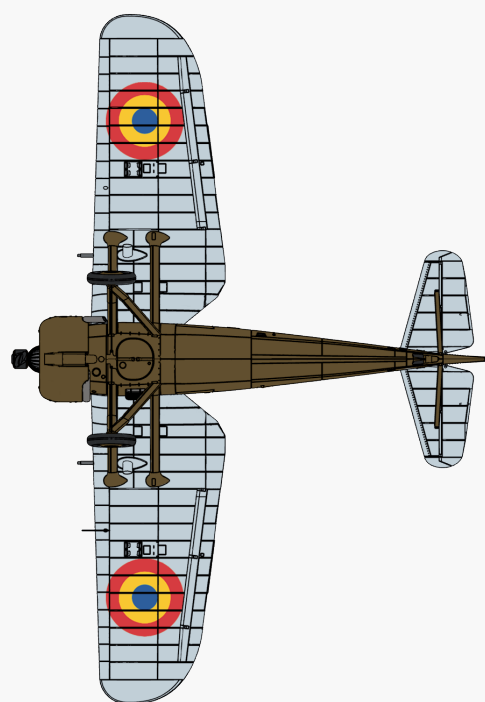
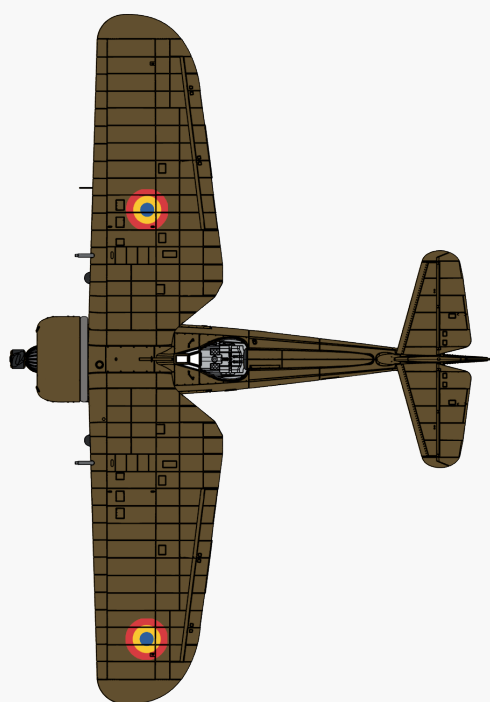
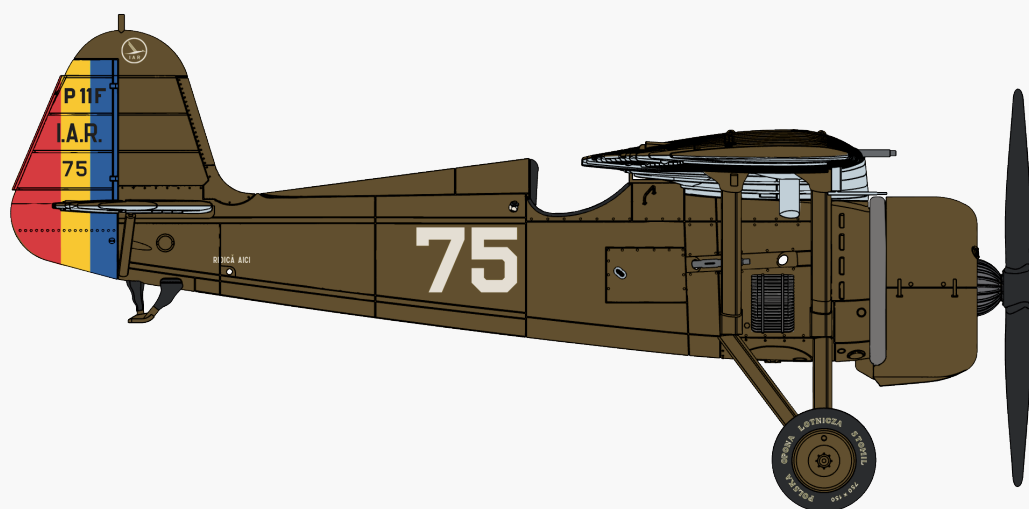
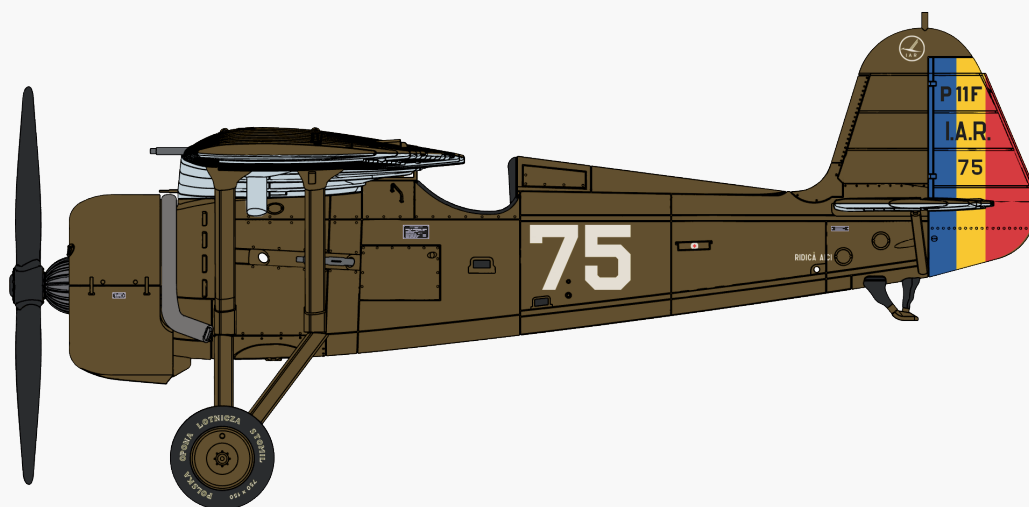


This view provides an excellent look into the smaller markings on the Romanian P.11F. Starting from the top of the fin there is a circular IAR logo, on the rudder one can see 'P 11F', 'I.A.R.' and '75' airplane number. On the fuselage, just below the leading edge of the horizontal stabilizer there is a faintly visible plate with the instructions for empennage angle of attack adjustments. Below and slightly to the front there is a white 'Ridică aici' (Lift here) stencil. First Aid sign and large, white airplane number 75 complete the list of easily recognizable elements. A keen observer will also notice traces of airplane information plate under the windscreen and an engine plate on its cover – see the colour plate below for their exact locations. (Dan Antoniu/Horia Stoica collection)



Final photo in the series, this one allows a good view on the leading edge colour demarcation line. Worth noting are the wing machine gun covers made of canvas, which proves that it was possible to fly with them put on. (Dan Antoniu/Horia Stoica collection)

PZL/I.A.R. P.11F NO. 75, FLOTILA 1 VÂNĂTOARE, DECEMBER 1939



PZL/I.A.R. P.11F No. 114

FLOTILA 2 VÂNĂTOARE / PILOT ADJ.STG.AV. MARIAN VOICA / JUNE 1940

Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact signed on 23rd August 1939 divided spheres of influence in Eastern Europe between Germany and Soviet Union. The latter claimed exclusive rights to Bessarabia (then part of Romania) and Stalin decided to look south soon after concluding war with Finland. In the spring of 1940 Odessa and Kyiv Military Districts were ordered to start preparations for annexation. Newly-created Southern Front under general Georgy Zhukov completed deployment along the Romanian border on 10th June 1940. They did not move immediately, however, as Stalin wanted to complete the occupation of the Baltic States first. With that action complete and allied France defeated, there were no more obstacles. On 26th of June Molotov presented an ultimatum in which the Soviet Union demanded withdrawal of Romanian military units and civil administration from Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina. Reluctantly, but having no other realistic choice, Romania accepted the ultimatum two days later. Red Army units moved forward immediately. At the time of this crisis new fighter types were already on the horizon with the first batches of Bf 109E and Hurricanes reaching Romania, but none of them was yet in operational service. P.11F, P.11c and a handful of He 112 were the

only available types with first of them being still the most numerically significant fighter in service. Subject of the second colour option in the IBG kit, P.11F No. 114 was making an approach for landing on the Câmpia Turzii airfield on 12th June 1940 flown by pilot Adj.Stg.Av. Marian Voica. Unfortunately due to insufficient speed the airplane stalled and crashed. Returned to service after the repair, it crashed again in April 1941 and was subsequently struck off charge. Multicolour camouflage schemes started to show up on a large scale in early 1940 in many variations. P.11F No. 114 most likely had large spots of terracotta (light, reddish brown) and light green applied on the base khaki brown colour (although dark olive green also cannot be excluded). This time light blue-grey was used more extensively than in No. 75 described above – it was applied on the bottom of fuselage, wing struts and undersurfaces of landing gear legs. At that time, airplane numbers were moved from the fuselage to the fin, same as they were on the P.11B a couple of years earlier. As it was in case of aircraft No. 75 (and all P.11F at the time, in fact), cockades on top of the wing were placed asymmetrically.



This set of photos of No. 114 after the accident in June 1940 was also taken using orthochromatic film, but this time the photographer most likely used a yellow or yellow-green lens filter. It was a very popular way to at least partially correct the weaknesses of the ortho films by making the yellows lighter and blues darker – that way these colours looked more natural on the prints. However, it had no impact on the reds, that's why they are still very dark in the photos. Worth noting is the camouflage scheme – distinction between two light colours is not an easy one, but a thorough analysis of original prints allows for a relatively accurate reconstruction. Please note the significant overspray in places and what looks like a light paint splash or careless paintwork just behind the pilot's headrest. Again, the aircraft has a visibly glossy finish. (Dan Antoniu/Horia Stoica collection)



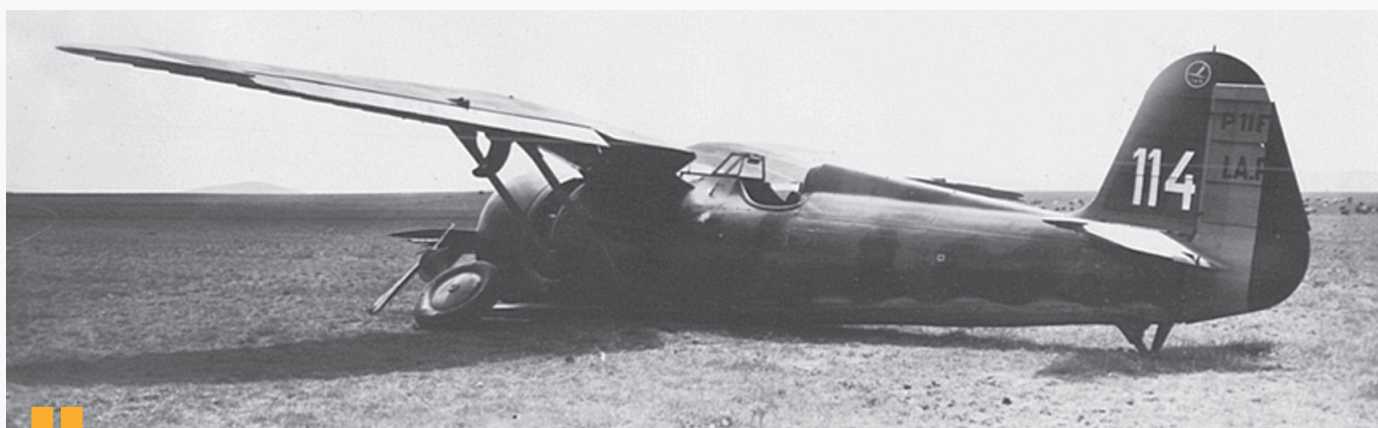
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Front view shows well the wavy line of undersurface colour on the fuselage – a feature typical for that type of camouflage. Another interesting point is the ragged division of colours between top and bottom of the wing. Same as in case of No.75, the aircraft has the canvas covers of machine guns put on. Unpainted (most likely ceramic) antenna lead-in insulator is visible just behind the cockpit, but no wires or masts are visible indicating that no radio has been installed. Seatbelts have been thrown outside of the cockpit (as was the usual practice). Same as in case of No. 75, there is a natural metal (unpainted) ring around the outlet under the cockpit. (Dan Antoniu/Horia Stoica collection)



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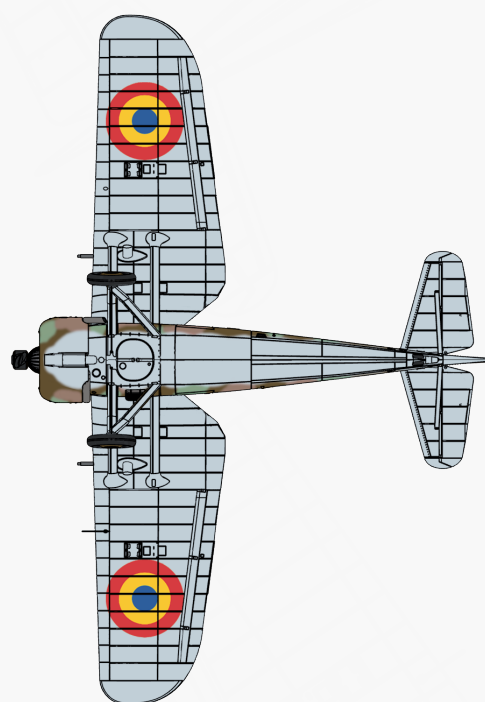
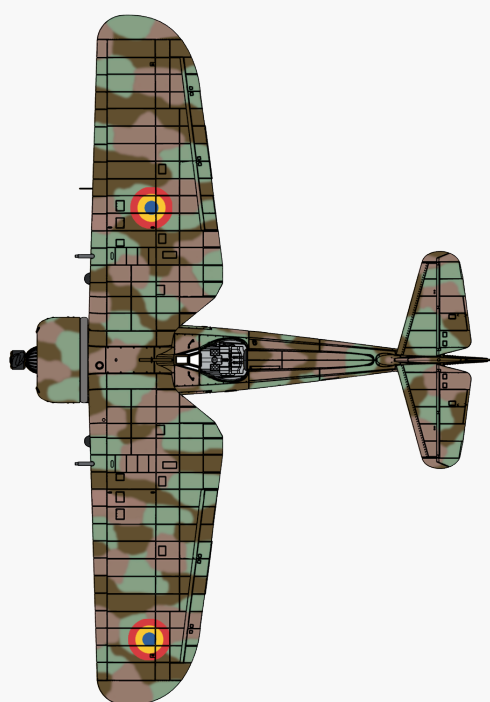
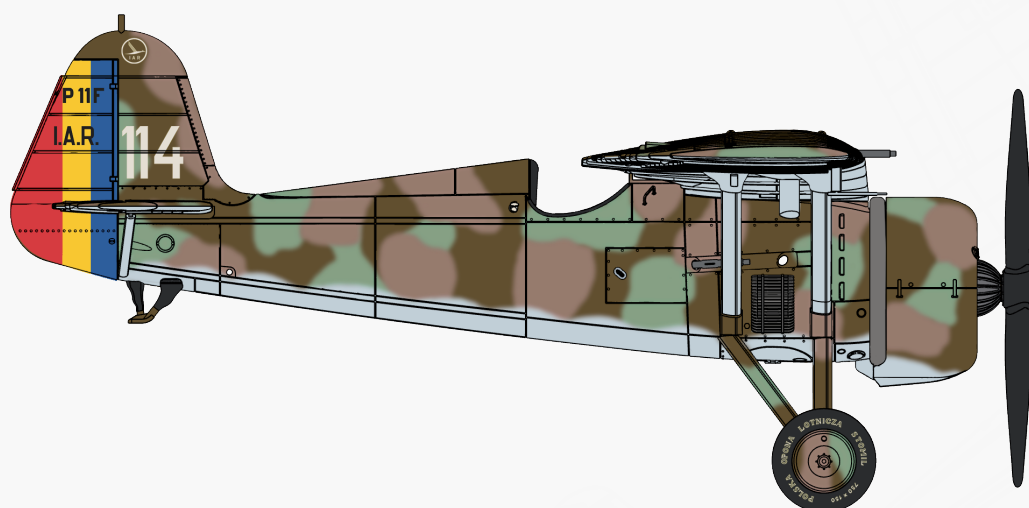
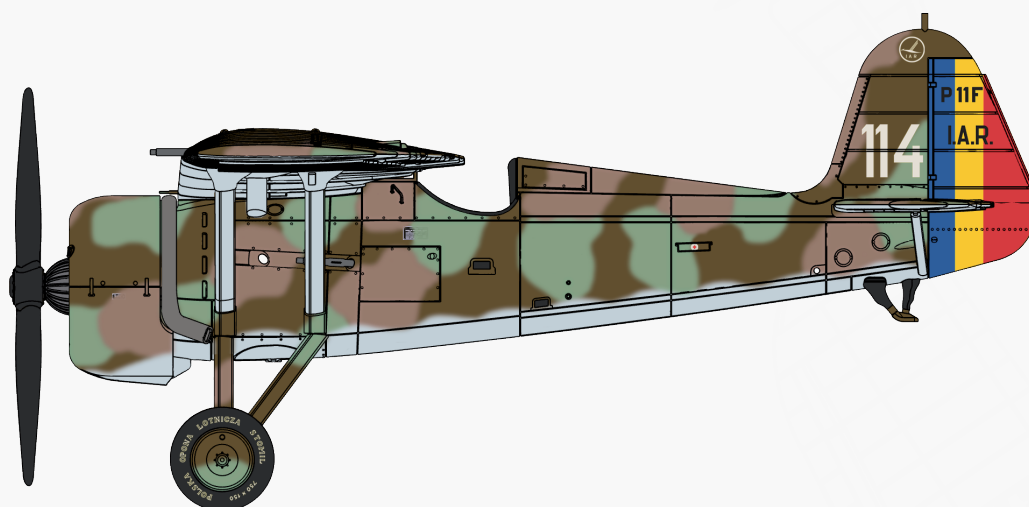
One more shot from the front. Note the faintly visible underwing cockade and again the glossy look of the airplane, making the reconstruction of camouflage a very time-consuming task. Well visible is the way in which wooden propellers shatter on impact. (Dan Antoniu/Horia Stoica collection)



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A great view showing the camouflage on the left side of the fuselage, but also allowing for comparisons with No. 75 markings. The IAR logo is still on the fin and doesn't seem to be covered with lighter colours or put on top of them. Clearly visible is the fact that with the move of airplane number (in this case 114) from the fuselage to the fin, it also disappeared from the rudder. The First Aid sign is still there, but 'Ridică aici' is nowhere to be seen. Information plates seem to be at least partially overpainted. (Dan Antoniu/Horia Stoica collection)

PZL/I.A.R. P.11F NO. 114, FLOTILA 2 VÂNĂTOARE, JUNE 1940



PZL/I.A.R. P.11F No. 65

GRUPUL 3 VÂNĂTOARE / PILOT ADJ.AV. IOAN BOSÂNCEANU / JUNE 1941

Final option shows an airplane in a camouflage and markings typical for the spring of 1941. By that time Romania was strongly on the Axis side. After losing Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina to the Soviet Union, Northern Transylvania to Hungary and Southern Dobruja to Bulgaria in the summer of 1940, a new government, formed in September 1940, re-oriented towards Germany. Aiming to secure its territorial integrity from further losses and to bolster its air defence, Romania asked for military assistance. Both countries agreed for Wehrmacht units to enter Romania in October. Included were Luftwaffe fighter and flak units for protection of Bucharest and Ploesti oil fields, the latter accounting for a significant part of German fuel supply and being an obvious target for potential British bombardment. In April 1941 Romania was one of the countries from which German attack on Yugoslavia was launched, although Aeronautica Regala Romana limited itself to providing air defence of the country, including cover of the Luftwaffe airfields. By then preparations for Operation Barbarossa were already well advanced.

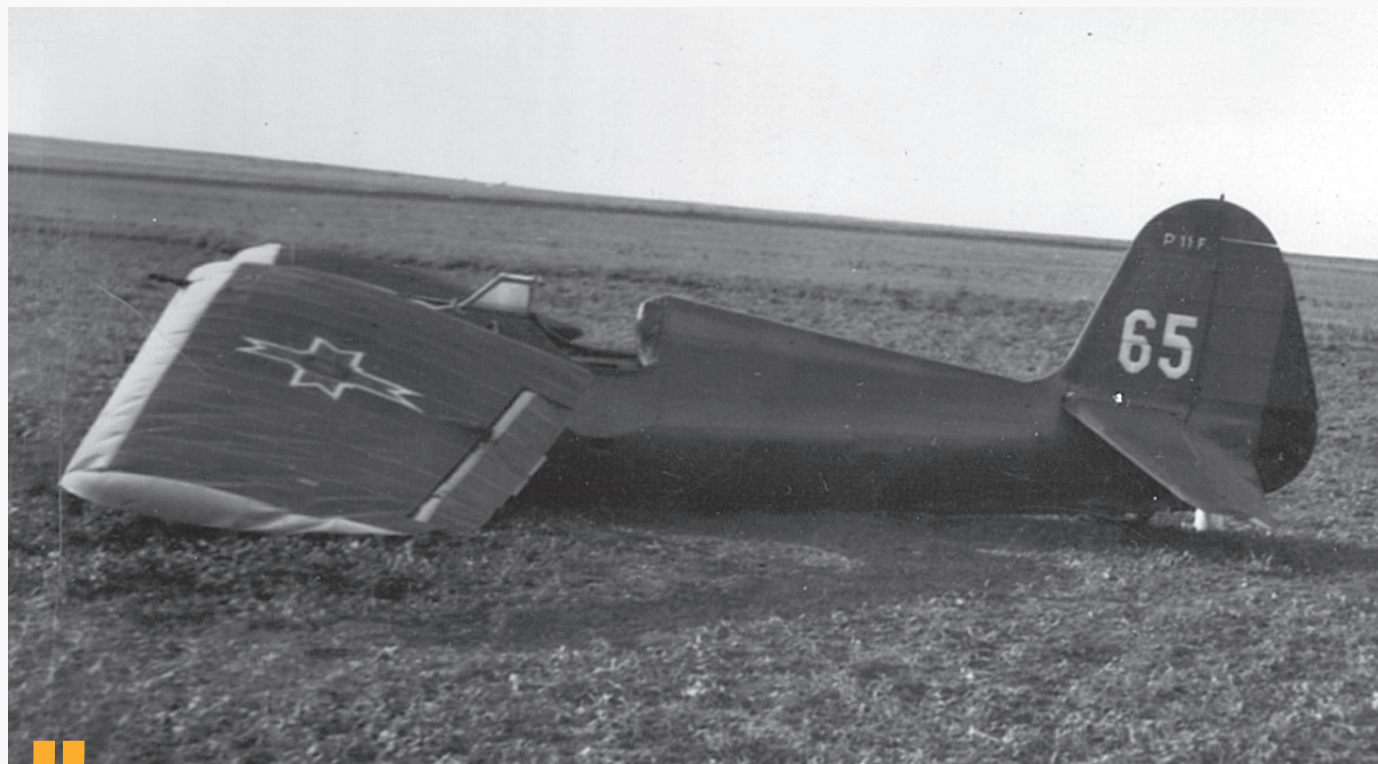
In the spring of 1941 the core of Romanian fighter force was at last consisting of the modern fighter types, amongst them IAR.80, Bf 109E, He 112 and Hurricane. They allowed

for the planned expansion of the air force, but the need for more fighters meant that P.11F still played its part in first line units. Below photos show an airplane No.65, flown by pilot Adj.Av. Ioan Bosânceanu, that was involved in a mid-air collision with P.11F No. 142 on 10th June 1941. Repair was deemed uneconomical and the airplane was subsequently scrapped.

By mid-1941 majority of Romanian fighters were repainted in two-colour camouflage, in case of No. 65 of the 'stripes' type (see the wing camouflage on the colour plate below) – one of its typical features was the wavy demarcation line between upper and undersurface colours on the fuselage. In all probability the camouflage colours were dark olive green and terracotta. Aircraft sported full set of recognition markings that were mandatory at the time: yellow 25cm bands on wings and fuselage (introduced in October 1940 as a recognition aid for German pilots operating from Romania), yellow engine cowling (another quick identification element that started to show up on Romanian airplanes in late 1940) and Michael's Crosses, that replaced cockades in early May 1941.



P.11F No. 65 after the accident on 10th June 1941. This set of photos was again taken using orthochromatic film, making reds and yellows (and browns for that matter) seem darker than they were. Well visible just behind the cockpit is the yellow band - a standard quick recognition marking used at that time. Signs of overpainting the cockade can be seen under the hand-applied Michael's Cross – this allows to reconstruct the look of the airplane in April 1941, at the time of the Axis invasion of Yugoslavia (see the colour plate below). Worth noting is the fact that tricolour (previously limited to the rudder) is extending all the way to the top of the fin. As in case of No. 75 and 114, the airplane has a well-polished look – a reflection of the horizon is clearly visible on the fuselage. To the outside of the crosses on the wings there are light spots visible – these are small, unpainted sheets of aluminium used as a base for antenna masts (the latter not mounted). (Dan Antoniu/Horia Stoica collection)



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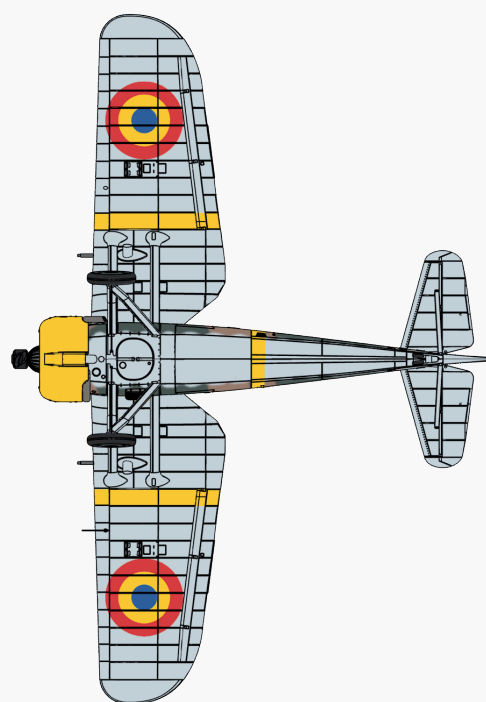
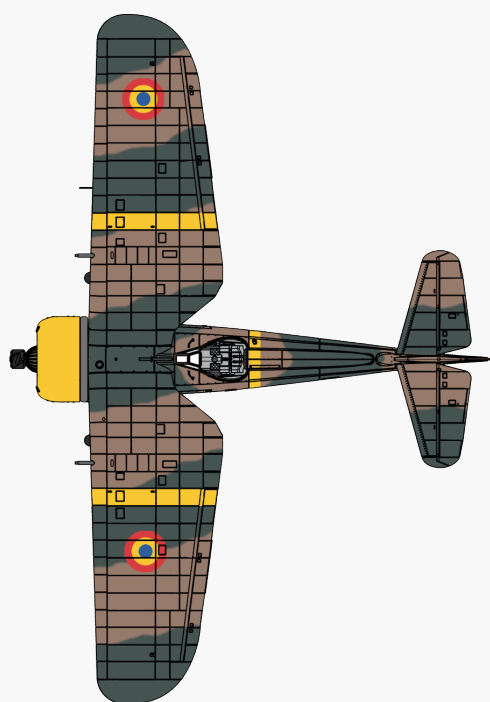
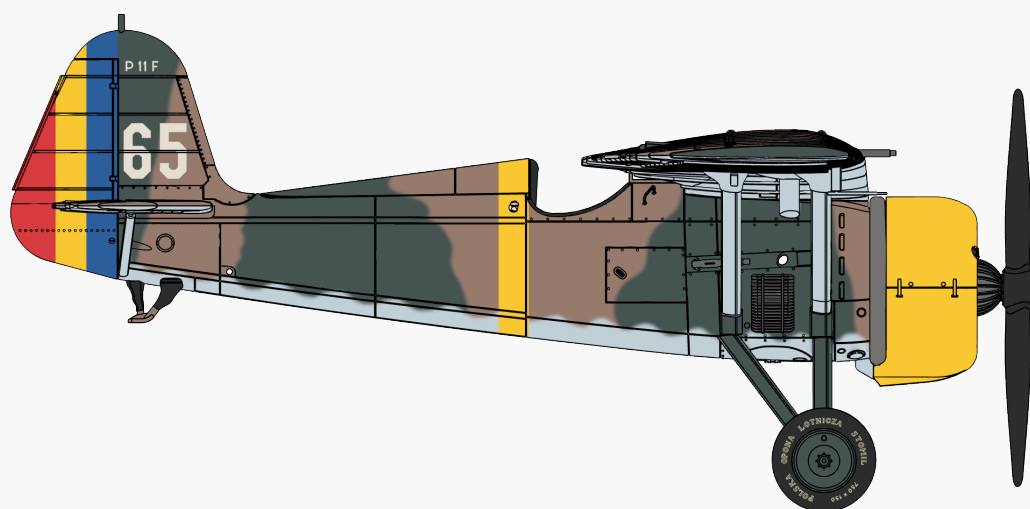
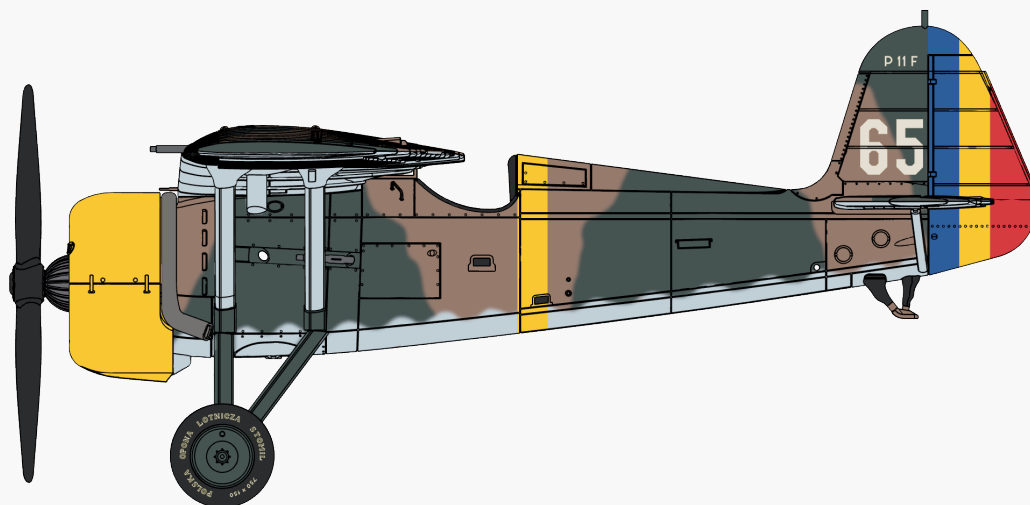
Left side of the fuselage was in a delicate shade and this made the yellow and brown even darker and reduced the visibility of the band behind the cockpit and the contrast between two camouflage colours (fortunately there are other known photos of this side that clearly show both). Glossy surfaces also caused a very interesting effect, very typical for PZL fighters - smooth skin on the leading edge and outermost panels of the wings reflects large amounts of light into the camera lens making it seem very light. On the other hand, corrugated skin of the main wing panels reflects it at another angle, making them look much darker. Interesting are the smaller markings visible from that side. At that time airplanes didn't have the IAR logo reapplied during overhaul and in this case only 'P 11 F' was put at the top of the fin. Lack of First Aid marking is also typical – usually it was not applied on the airplanes in two-tone camouflage. Again, the hand-applied cross looks to be very uneven – even more so than the one on the right wing. This feature was fully recreated in the IBG model decals. (Dan Antoniu/Horia Stoica collection)



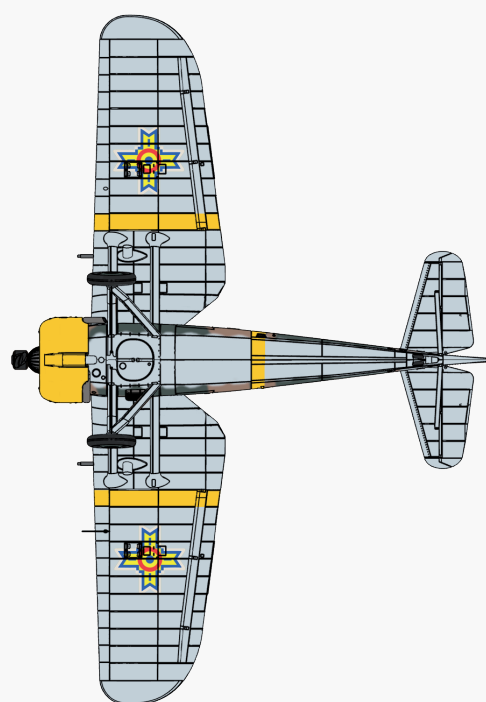
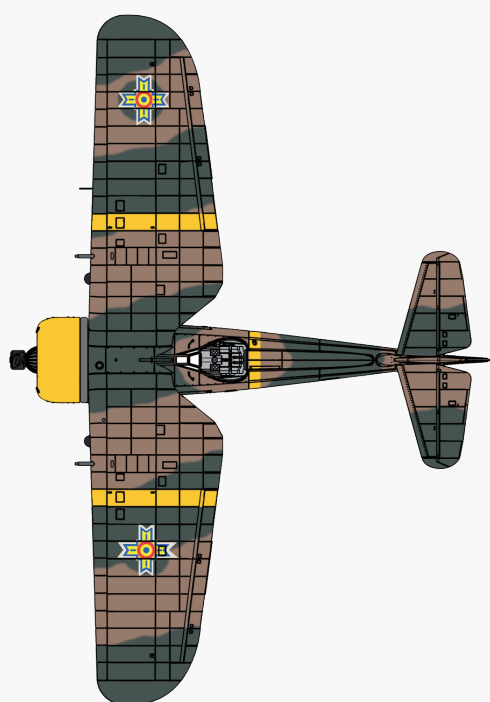
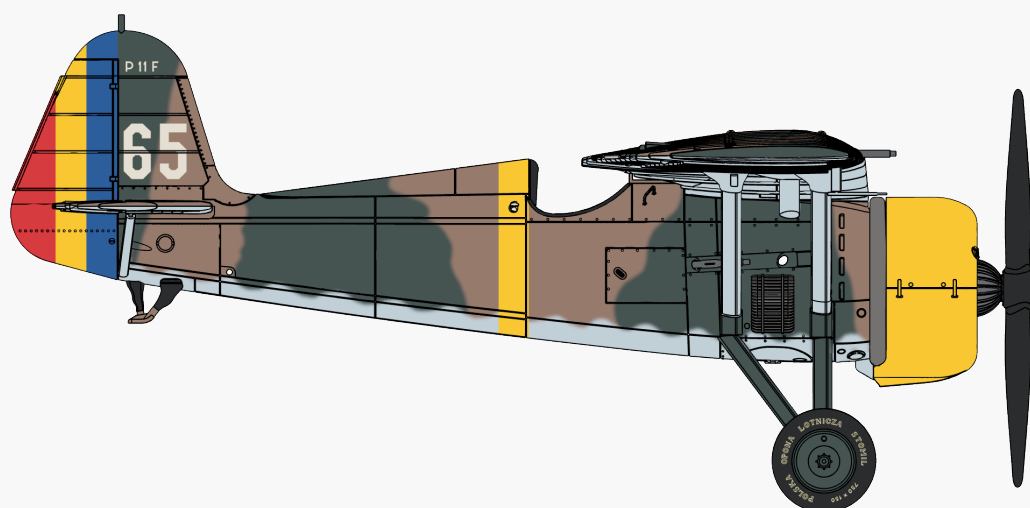
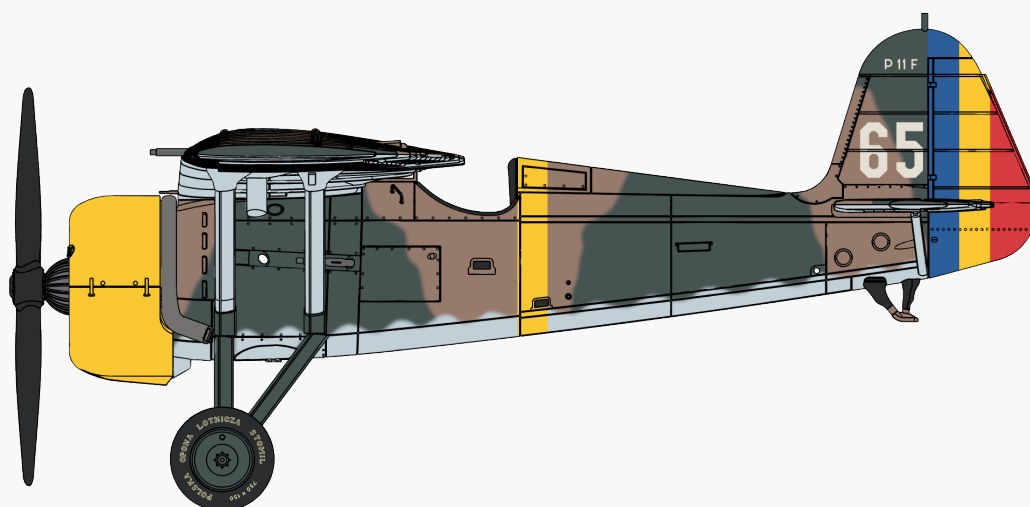
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Photo from the front shows well the placement of the yellow bands on the wings –part of the recognition markings used at the time, as mentioned earlier. Note also the differences between the two camouflage colours visible on the leading edge. (Dan Antoniu/Horia Stoica collection)

PZL/I.A.R. P.11F NO. 65, GRUPUL 3 VÂNĂTOARE, APRIL 1941



PZL/I.A.R. P.11F NO. 65, GRUPUL 3 VÂNĂTOARE, JUNE 1941



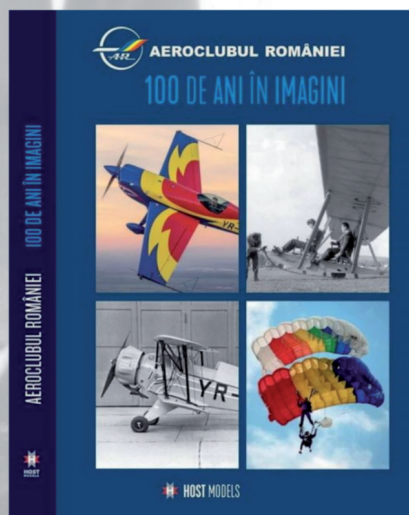
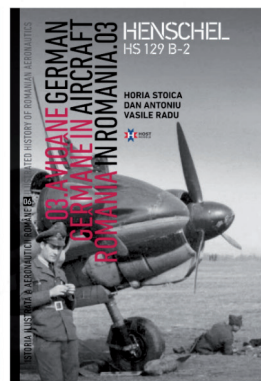
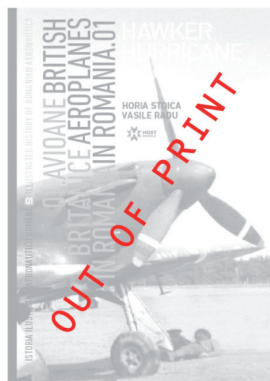
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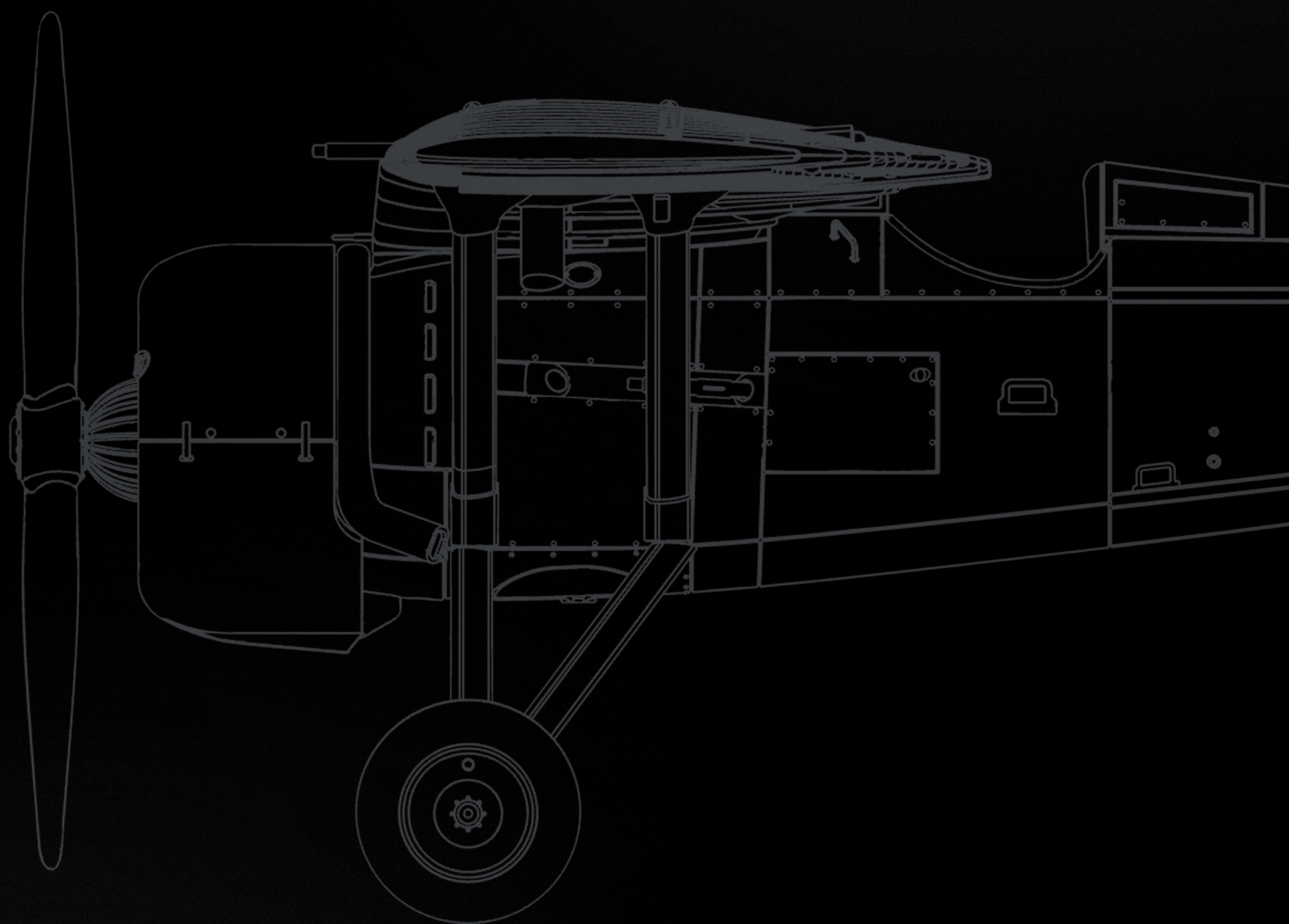
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