

fabricated victories as old wives' tales told by people who probably could not have been with us at all. Everything was precisely organised and connected up by the information service, telephones and radio stations. The Germans knew about every step we took. For a victory a pilot needed a witness in the air and ground signal units had to confirm it. It often happened that signal unit had confirmed it even before we landed. The wreckage of the plane or captured or dead crew were also necessary proofs of a victory. A faked victory would hardly have been officially recognised. Maybe it was possible in combats over the sea, but you still needed or witness, or in fact two for that. Anyway there were signal units on the coast too and a large number of German and Rumanian ships were moving around at the time in the surrounding waters of the Azov and Black Sea, and also confirmed the victories. If there were no witnesses or other proofs then a claim just wasn't recognised. That happened to me too. I have 32 confirmed victories but another 3 they wouldn't recognise, although I'm sure they can be declared certain."

The case for the authenticity of the victories is therefore strengthened not only by the fact that 215 of 13th Squadron's victories were recognised, but also by the fact that nearly 30 more were not confirmed. Leading specialists who have compared German claims with real Allied and Soviet losses consider that the differences between claimed and real losses are relatively small.



Ján Režňák, a future top Slovakian fighter ace.

(via Ján Režňák)



Avia B-534 fighters of the 37th (soon to be 13th) Squadron. The second version of Slovak markings is seen, supplemented with German crosses, in use from 10th September, 1939 until 15th October 1940. The first version of Slovak markings, in use from 23rd June 1939, had no white outline.

(via J.Krumbach)



The Chief of the VVZ staff, pplk.gšt. Alojz Ballay bids farewell to the 13th Squadron 1st Front Group members. Left: stot. Ondrej Ďumbala, npor. Jžn Gerthofer, rtk.rtm. František Cyprich, rtk. Jozef Drlička, čtk. Jozef Švejdik, pplk. Alojz Ballay, čtk. Jozef Jančovič, čtk Izidor Kovárik, rtk. rtm. Robert Nerad (chief mechanic). Piešťany airfield, 27th October, 1942.



Before departure for the Eastern Front. Left: stot. Ondrej Ďumbala, por. Jžn Gerthofer, rtk. rtm. František Cyprich, rtk. Jozef Drlička, čtk Jozef Švejdik, čtk Izidor Kovárik and rtk. rtm. Robert Nerad (chief mechanic). With his back to the camera is the Chief of the VVZ staff, pplk.gšt. Alojz Ballay. Piešťany airfield, 27th October 1942. (via J. Sehnal)



The VVZ Chief of Staff pplk. gšt. Alojz Ballay gives a speech to the pilots departing for the Eastern Front. Piešťany airfield, 27th October 1942.





A poor quality but interesting photo. ét. Jozef Janžovič demonstrates the damage done to his Bf 109F, in which he managed to return to base after a collision with a Polikarpov I-16.



Scramble! Two Bf 109G-4s of the 13th Squadron taxiing. In the foreground is "yellow 1", flown amongst others by rtk. Izidor Kovčrik. Anapa airfield, May 1943.

LaGG-3 flown by Sgt Oleg Gavrilov. of the 269. IAP, shot down on 17th January, 1943, apparently by npor. Gerthofer (CAMO)





*One of the Slovak Emils at Piešťany airfield in 1943. On the fuselage the over-painted original German, D-IXWT, can be seen. In the background is an ambulance plane, a Caudron C-445M Goeland.
(via J. Sehnal)*



Flying School Bf 109E-7s at Trenčianské Biskupice airfield in 1943.



(via P. Šumichrast).

II. The end of the 13th Squadron

The direct threat to Slovak air space by the 15th USAF, located in Southern Italy, forced the Slovak Ministry of Defence to carry out some measures concerning anti-aircraft defence. On 20th August 1943 a Scramble Section with four aircraft was organised at Vajnory airfield, near Bratislava. Initially the unit operated four Bf 109s, E-2, E-4, and E-7 versions (W. Nr 6442, 3317, 972, and 4870), and one liaison Praga E-39 (No 32). Later on the unit was joined by an observation Letov Š-328 (No 108) and an Avia B-534 (No 404) fighter biplane.

The pilots of the Scramble Section were ex-members of the I Technical Squadron, zvk František Cyprich (commander), zvk Izidor Kovárik, zvk Ján Režňák, zvk František Brezina, zvk Pavel Zeleňák and zvk Josef Štauder. They were veterans of the 13th Squadron's **1st Front Group**, who had returned a few weeks previously from the Eastern Front. They formed the elite of the Slovak fighter pilots, as between them they scored a total of 112 confirmed "kills". Apart from the six pilots mentioned above, ten mechanics, two armourers and

*Ground personnel
refueling an Emil.*

(via P. Šumichrast)





This Avia B-534 (Version IV), M-1, of the 13th Squadron, appeared to have a slightly worn-out surface. The yellow identification markings were only present on the fuselage and the wings.



Messerschmitt Bf 109G-4, "yellow 2", of 13. (slow.)/JG 52 in April 1944, when the Squadron operated from Anapa airfield, Kuban. It sports the standard Luftwaffe camouflage, i.e. the upper surfaces RLM 74 (Graugrün), and RLM 75 (Grauviolett) paint, the side and the lower surfaces in RLM 76 (Lichtblau), on which the irregular mottle of RLM 74, 75, and RLM 02 (Gru) are visible. The lower cowling, the stripe on the fuselage and the wing tips were painted yellow (RLM 04- Gelb), characteristic of aircraft operated on the Eastern Front. The only sign that the aircraft is flown by the Slovaks is the spinner's front part, painted with the Slovak national colours (white, blue and red), while the rest of the spinner remained in the original RLM 70 (Schwarzgrün).



Similar to "yellow 2" was the painting scheme of this Bf 109G-4/R6 "yellow 4" of 13.(slow.)/JG 52. However, it didn't have the lower cowling painted yellow, and the tactical number had a black outline. Visible also are traces of the original Stammkennzeichen.