

ALBUQUERQUE SCALE MODELERS



<http://abqscalemodelers.com>

March 2013

PRESIDENTIAL SPIEL TONY HUMPHRIES

This month I would like to look at a less obvious area that sometimes affects us as modelers. When we buy a kit and it looks cool in the shop, it's an interesting subject, in the right scale etc. we often don't think about what will happen if there are problems with it. What if you are missing a part? Or what if one or more parts are not molded correctly? Maybe the decals are misaligned? Or a part is broken?

Well, a number of manufacturers have services in place to assist with this. Unfortunately, the quality of these services varies enormously. Let us look at a few examples:

DML/Dragon: They are certainly famous within the armor modeling world (and presumably aircraft too) for

the quality of their parts and after sales service. In much the same way that Attila the Hun was known for his scented-candle export business... I have heard of people who have waited for more than a year for parts and even more who never received them no matter what they did. Others seem to have had no problems, however, so there must be a trick to this. Whether it requires bribery, corruption, threats, pre-emptive drone strikes, hostage-taking or sheer dumb luck, who knows? DML certainly aren't saying.

Revell: Another hit or miss service. Having dealt with them a couple of times now, I have certainly been tempted to hit them but at my age would probably have

February meeting highlights, below L – R: Members checking out the deals; goodies available at the swap meet; and the business meeting in progress.



missed... They regularly drop products from their own product line without even telling their own staff or removing them from the website(s) so that any attempt to order the kit, get parts or decals etc. from them stands a 72.8471% (approximately) chance of the item being OOP and them therefore telling you to depart forth and multiply. On a small but relentlessly cheerful postcard. After a fourteen-week wait... Otherwise they will refer you to the parent company in Germany who have an arcane and fiendishly difficult system to negotiate (their phone system being in a bewildering mix of medieval German and robotically spoken Enigma code). Much of the time it's difficult to tell whether they're asking you a question or making fun of you. Often, by the time you find out, the product is OOP there too. They seem to actually make so few kits that I assume their only factory is in Italy. They won't actually sing *Deutschland Über Alles* at you, but you can tell they're thinking it. To be fair, they do have what initially looks like a well thought out online part ordering system. Unfortunately it never works (often due to the OOP situation) and can really only have been created to act as a diversion to distract your attention while they bomb Warsaw.

Cromwell Models: The poster child for appalling service. The very name is enough to strike terror into the heart of any armor modeler, no matter how bold. The company is run by a Scotsman, which should probably tell you a lot and certainly explains why he grabs your money like Blackbeard on crystal meth and never lets it go again. *Ever*. This wouldn't be so bad if he ever actually released any products in return. But no. That would be asking far too much. Buying the products is hard enough. It would be easier to find the Holy Grail than to get spare or replacement parts out of them. The Scottish concept of service is generally a headbutt in the face accompanied by much coughing, cursing and the gratuitous throwing of porridge—the “service” part being that they did you a favor and didn't kick you in the unmentionables while you were on the ground bleeding. So be grateful for small mercies. Cromwell have taken this idea and run with it. A long, long way... In fact, they are probably still running. Dressed in a blue and white striped t-shirt and black face mask, carrying a large bag with “swag” written on it, if I'm not mistaken.

Tamiya: Again, another mixed bag (well, the woman I spoke to there the first time could probably more accurately be described as a miserable old bag, but I digress...). If parts, or the kits that they are from, are in stock with their US company/distributor, they're usually pretty good and deserve credit for this. If they're not, it would be quicker to swim to Japan and get them yourself, sharks or no sharks.

Heller: customer service from a French company?!? I am not even going to dignify that with a response...

Airfix: if you live in the UK, their service is pretty good. Quick, efficient and thorough. If you live outside of the UK, however, then you may be in for some disappointment. Airfix take the traditional English approach to foreigners. If at all possible, distract them and invade their country. If not, shout at them slowly and wave your arms around randomly, assuming that they could all speak English if they weren't so bloody lazy and assuming that they're just being stubborn and difficult. Or deaf. The English concept of customer service is generally similar to the Scottish one but without the initial headbutt and

Year 2013 Contest Quick Reference Chart

Titles in **blue** indicate contests for points

- 04 Jan** **SPECIAL CONTEST #1**
SCI-FI/SCIENCE/REAL SPACE/FANTASY
Sponsored Contest: “Frickin’ Laser Beams” (Patrick Dick)
Sponsored Contest: “Rolls Royce” (Patrick Dick)
- 01 Feb** **ASM Swap Meet**—no contest.
- 01 Mar** **Open Contest**—Any kit/subject/scale.
Sponsored Contest: “Revell 1/48 Ventura” (E-Board)
- 05 Apr** **More Than One Radial Engined**—
Any kit/subject/scale.
Famous Motorsports Vehicles—
Any kit/subject/scale.
Sponsored Contest: “Best Sci-Fi Spaceship” (Don Smith)
- 03 May** **SPECIAL CONTEST #2**
SINGLE IN-LINE ENGINED AIRCRAFT
Sponsored Contest: “Revell 1/32 He-219” (Hobby Proz) **tentative**
- 07 Jun** **Cold War**—Any kit/subject/scale.
Cherche la Femme—Female-named subject, any kit/subject/scale.
- 12 Jul** **Open Contest**—Any kit/subject/scale.
Sponsored Contest: “North African Armor” (James Guld, Tony Humphries)
- 02 Aug** **ASM Swap Meet**—no contest.
- 13 Sep** **On the Water**—Anything waterborne, any kit/subject/scale.
Beyond Babe Artwork—Any subject with non-pinup nose art.
Sponsored Contest: “TBA” (Gil De La Plain)
- 04 Oct** **Axis of WWII**—Any subject *excluding* Germany and Japan.
Go Figure—Any humanoid figure.
Sponsored Contest: “Big” (Brian Peck)
- 01 Nov** **Open Contest**—Any kit/subject/scale.
Sponsored Contest: “Danny Roberts / Best P-38” (Mike Blohm, John Tate)
- 06 Dec** **SPECIAL CONTEST #3**
JET POWER
Plus *Model of the Year* competition!

with the addition of the outstretched pinky finger and stiff-upper-lip, to add the element of style and sophistication. The customer is always wrong, but is told so politely at least (this is somehow worse) although always with the suggestion that you are somehow inferior, you've trodden in something nasty on the way-in and who invited you over here anyway? Airfix are happy to embrace this approach.

So the experience for the modeler varies widely. Some companies such as Academy, are actually pretty good in my experience at least, and deserve some recognition as such. Others, such as Cromwell, are clearly the spawn of Satan and deserve to be nailed to a large lump of driftwood and left there for the seagulls. So, you pay your money and you take your choice. Except of course, without some rigorous research ahead of time, how do you know what to expect? Even then, will your experience be typical? It's a lottery I'm afraid and without the miniscule chance of \$150 million in your pocket at the end of it.

Let's face it—some of these companies really need to pull their finger out and address the needs of their customers. Do some market research and look up what after-sales service actually *means!* Also, don't just assume that we're sheep and we'll buy the 47th hypothetical Panzer that they've released this year, that only ever existed as a hastily completed pencil drawing on the back of a cigarette packet after last call in the local Bierkeller the day before the Russians arrived. We know that it only differs from the other paper panzers because of the inclusion of one different decal and a neatly molded squashed stoat on the running gear. Actually, if they really did the stoat part, I'd probably buy one... Otherwise, no thanks. So come on, manufacturers. Some of you are doing a great job but some of you really need to do your homework. You know who you are. So do we!

SCI-FI UPDATE

JOE WALTERS

Time to Fill Some Space Again!

First off, the annual StarFest sci-fi convention, which includes a large and aggressive model competition, takes place in Denver

FRED'S FOTO FILE

FRED FRANCESCHI

German Museum Visits

About seven and nine years ago I took several vacations to Germany. I'd have to check my passport stamps to see just when. And, of course, I hit up all the military museums I could find. These photos are from museums in Dresden (I think) and Sinsheim.

The museum in Dresden is a military museum run by the German army logistics center. It has a military function in that things such as uniforms, weapons, etc., are grouped so that engineers and equipment designers can study the past to help design the future. What a concept. And everything was well laid out and presented.

The word "Panzer" translates to "Armored Fighting Vehicle," so the sign showing PANZER T



34 makes sense. I think that was at the Auto & Technik Museum Sinsheim.



This is a switching locomotive at Frankfurt. I saw it while I was on the way to the Sinsheim museum. It looked "cute and colorful," so I took a couple of snapshots. What the heck.

Is that a C-119? Probably at Sinsheim. As I look at the photo, it appears that they removed some of the blades on the right engine's propeller to fit the airplane against the wall.



[Editor's note: All of Fred's photos from the German museums, larger and in full resolution, may be found in the Bonus Pages! -JW]

this year on the weekend of April 19 – 21 at the Marriott Denver Tech Center, Details are on their web site (<http://www.starland.com>). The hotel is filling up fast, so if you're interested, move quickly!

Polar Lights (<http://round2models.com/models/polar-lights>) has been busy, and has introduced a full-



blown kit of the 1960s George Barris Batmobile (the deluxe kit is 1/22; a 1/25 kit is also available). Parts are included to build a big block engine or a full jet-turbine engine. Photoetch parts are also included for some details. The obvious figures are included, along with extensive decals.

Along with the Batmobile, they are also offering the Black Beauty from the 1966 television series *The Green Hornet*. This kit is in 1/32.



Moebius Models (<http://www.moebiusmodels.com>) is bringing out a new Battlestar Pegasus, in scale with their Galactica model. See photo for comparison.



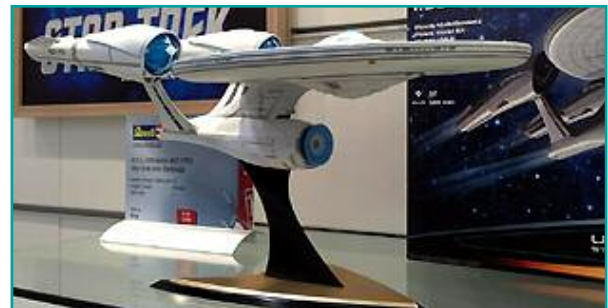
On the Star Trek front, Polar Lights is issuing old and new kits, some with new box art. A special snap-kit edition of the old TV-series *Enterprise* will come with an in-scale *Botany Bay* from the episode *Space Seed*. Go ahead, you know what to shout!



A Klingon battlecruiser is also offered, shown here in Romulan livery.



And are we finally going to get a kit of the new movie *Enterprise*? Starship Modeler has this photo from Revell Germany (<http://www.starshipmodeler.com>).



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ASM members are encouraged to submit articles, reviews and other items as appropriate. Contact editor Joe Walters for details and specs. Submission deadline for each issue is the 20th of the preceding month.

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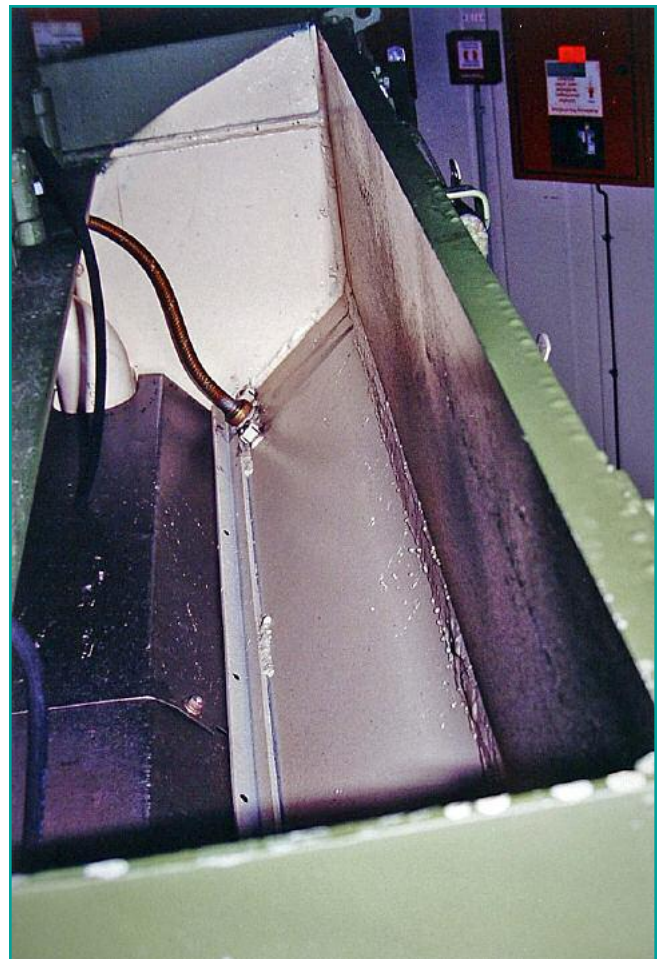


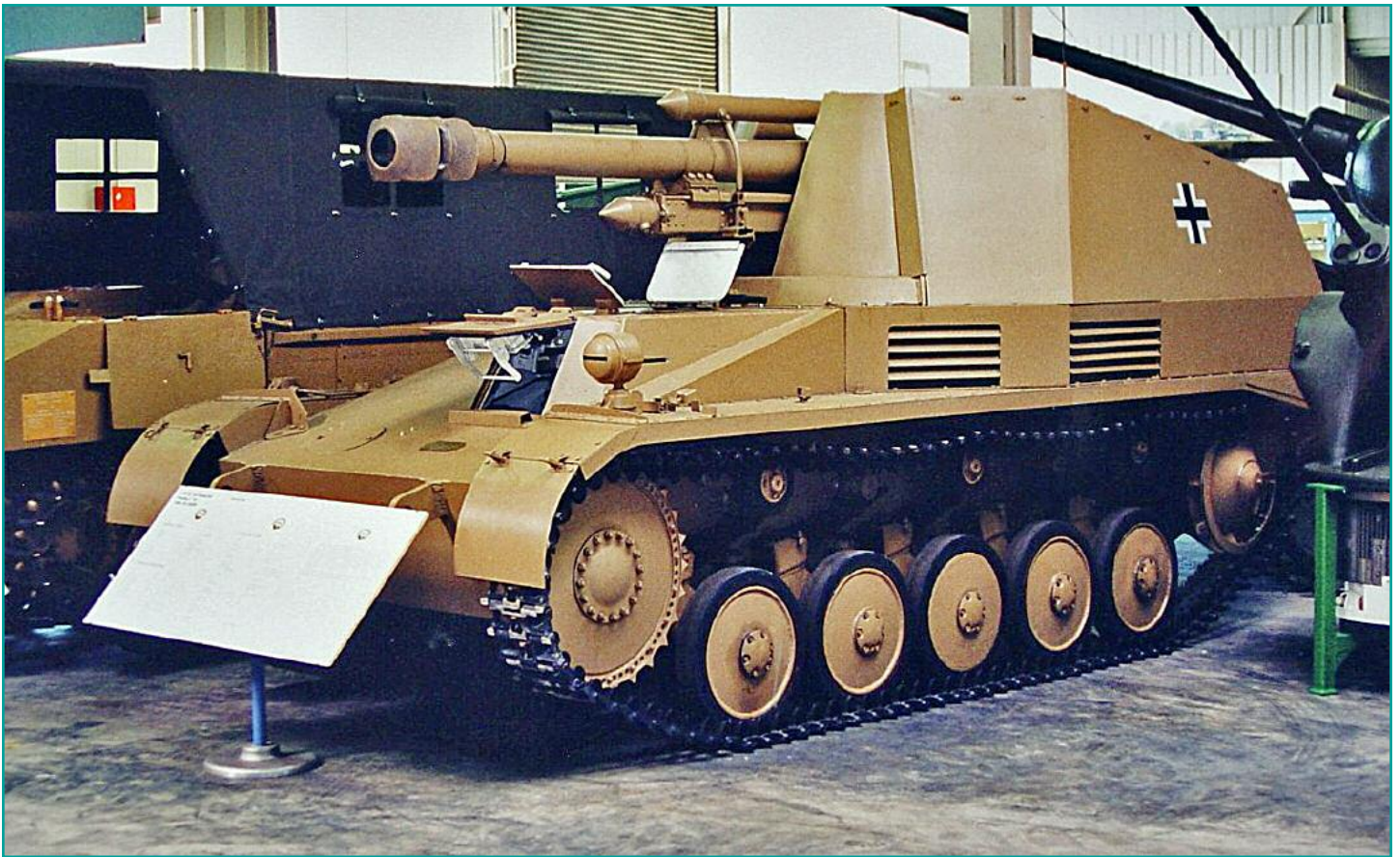
I think this was also at the Sinsheim museum.



This was probably taken at the Army museum at Dresden. An M5 light tank.

I remember taking a shot “up the rear” of the same M5 tank, but this photo may be of something else. Oh, well.





Another Marder at the Dresden museum



Is that a Panzer III? Dresden museum again.

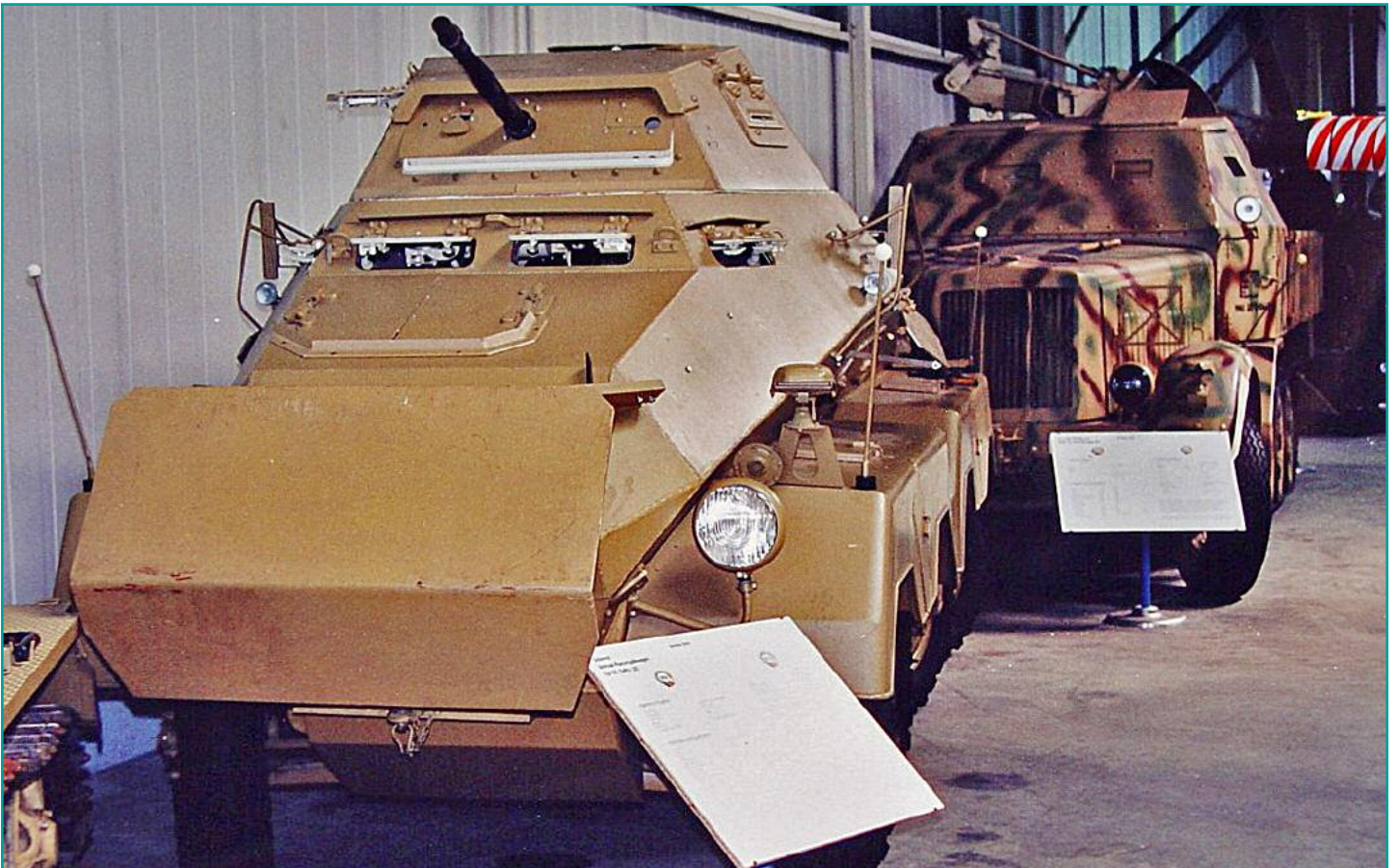


Above: A row of armored vehicles; just look at all those gun barrels. At Dresden.

Next group: Photos of an armored car at the Dresden museum.

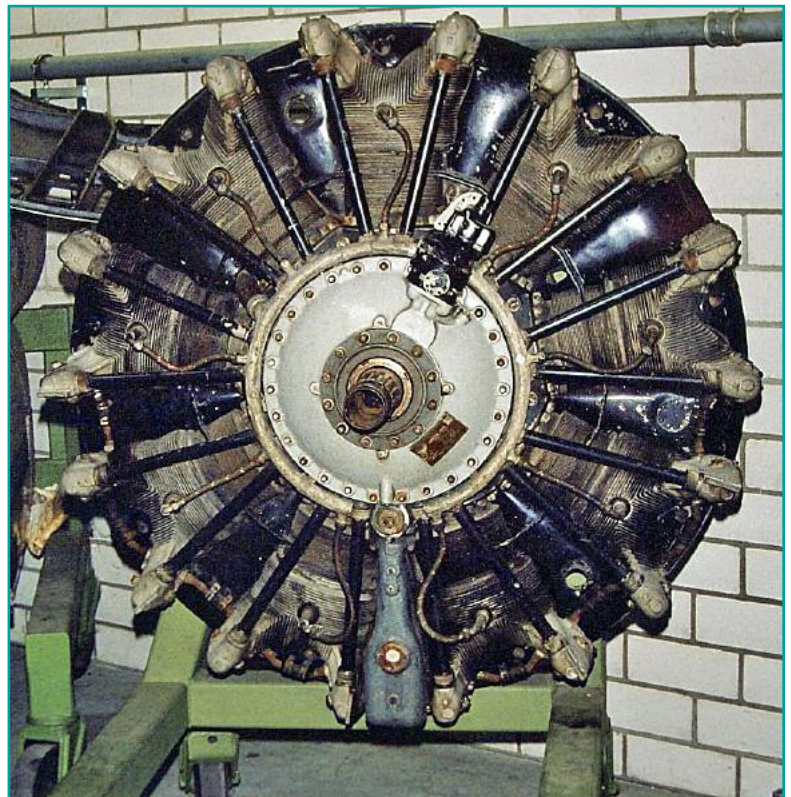
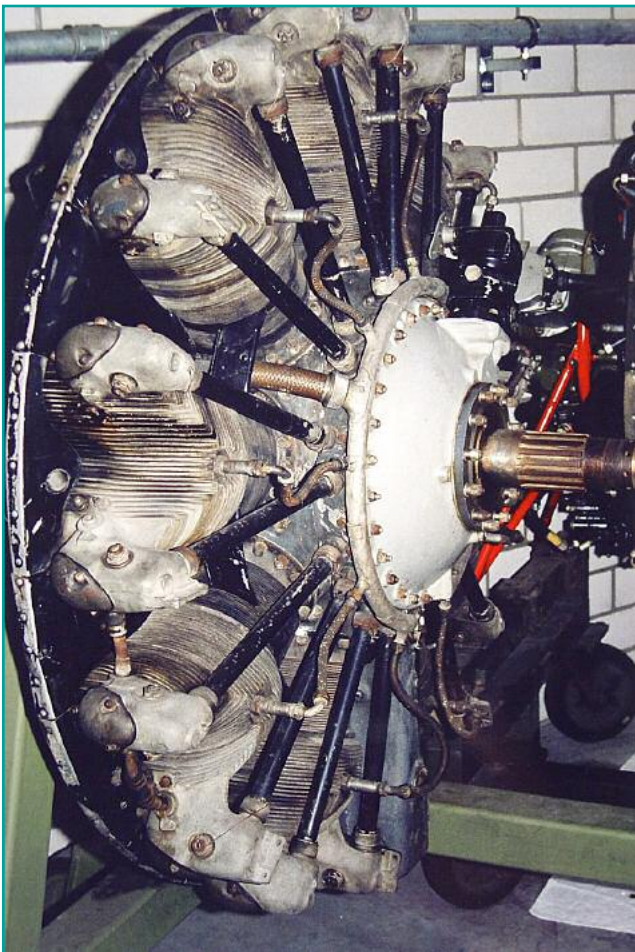








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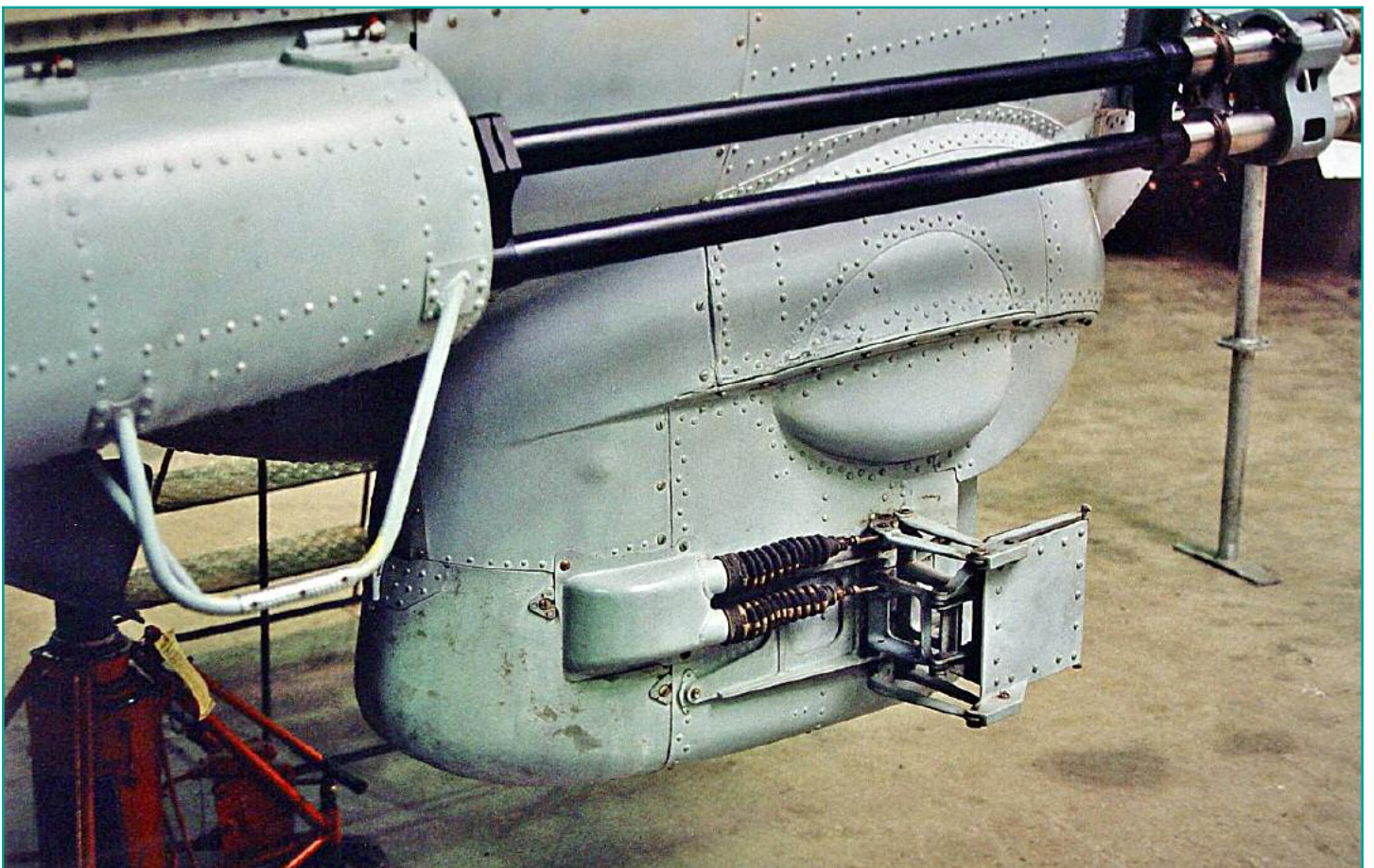
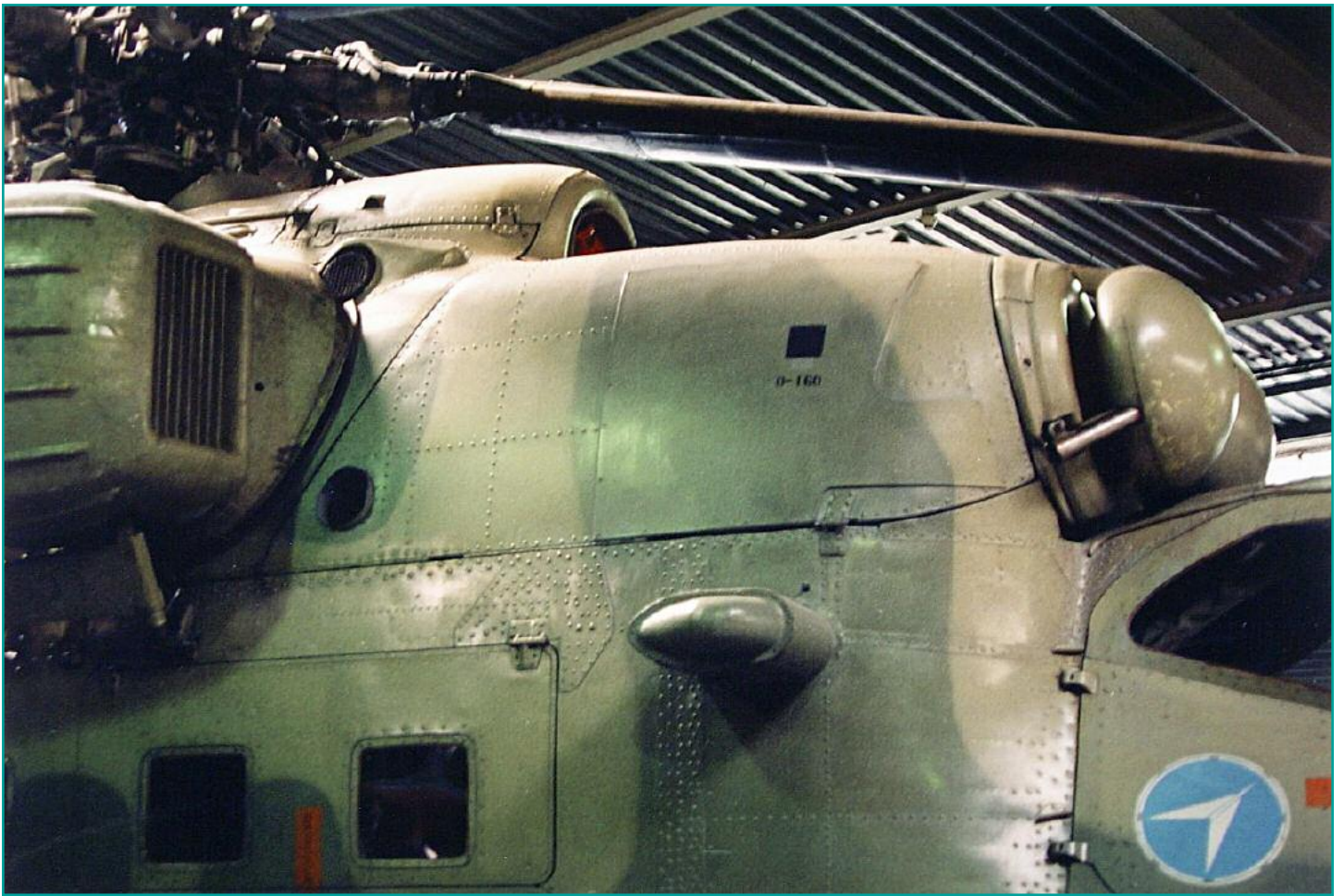


I sometimes take photos of radial engines, so I can figure out how to paint them.



Four shots of a Hind D. This was after West Germany and East Germany unified, so Soviet equipment that was formerly used by East Germany was now available to the reunified Germany.







An F-104 in German markings.