



RESOURCES FOR MODELERS

MODEL REVIEW

Junkers J.1, Eduard 1:72 scale

Reviewed by *Steve Monroe*



It is widely recognized that there have been tremendous advances in aviation technology during times of war. The most commonly cited example has always been World War II, when 1939 saw frontline use of the Bf-109E and the P-40B, compared to six short years later when those respective services saw the Me-262 and P-80 in the front ranks. These were major technological leaps in a short period of time.

In comparison, World War I is seen as the era of the wood, fabric and wire biplanes. To be sure, there was marked advances in tactics, and even in the decision about how airplanes were to be utilized as a weapon of war. But advances in technology? Not in The Great War, where 1913 started out with wood and fabric and closed five years later still in wood and fabric.

Not so fast, grasshopper. True, it may look to us in this age of space shuttles like a biplane is just a biplane, but there were some major design elements developed during this first world war.

Professor Hugo Junkers was an early pioneer in the design and construction of all metal aircraft, beginning with a number of one off designs built with thin iron sheets for skinning. The iron, of course, made for a heavy and impractical airplane.

Professor Junkers and his design team turned to duraluminum to solve the weight problem, and were able to design a metal airplane that was light enough to have performance capabilities that made it a practical combat airplane. This first successful duraluminum airplane was the Junkers J 3.

The German Luftstreitkräfte (German Air Service) got very interested in Professor Junkers' metal airplanes as it began looking for a more survivable ground attack airplane to attack the concentrations of Allied troops in the trenches of the front lines. The traditional wood and fabric types were very vulnerable to ground fire. A specification was issued in the fall of 1916 for an armored ground attack airplane for the Luftstreitkräfte.

The Junkers J.I was designed and flown in a four month period between October 1916 and January 1917. The first flight of the J.I was January 27, 1917. The Inspektion der Fiegertruppen (Idflieg) placed an order for 100 production airplanes three weeks later. This airplane was the first all metal production airplane put into service anywhere.

The J.I entered squadron service on August 1, 1917, and was in the thick of combat within a month. A total of 227 J.Is were built. This airplane fulfilled its requirements, as it was popular with its flight crews. It was apparently an easy airplane to fly, with good handling characteristics. But it was probably the fact that it could get shot by ground fire and still return home safely that was it's most endearing feature.

The J.I was definitely leading edge technology for its time. It may have been a biplane, but without any outer wing struts or wire rigging it certainly looked more advanced than all of its contemporaries. The angular lines and corrugated metal wings truthfully earned it the nickname of "der fliegende Tank" (the flying tank). The cockpit and engine compartment were enclosed in a metal "bathtub" of 5mm thick iron.

Of all of the World War I aircraft out there that have not been done yet, the Junkers J.I was probably not at the top of too many "must do" wish lists. Yet Eduard of the Czech Republic has recently surprised the modeling world with a new 1/72nd kit of this unusual airplane.

This kit consists of 76 parts (I know, the box says 67 – but I'm a geek, and I counted), all molded in gray plastic. There will be a ProfiPack follow on with photo etched, but this boxing is all plastic. There are alternate parts for minor differences between the two markings options.

Starting with the cockpit, the level of detail is what we have come to expect from Eduard, highly detailed for a 1/72nd scale model. There are nine pieces making up the interior "bathtub" and it's components, including the seat shaped fuel tank. The tuck on the seat padding is accurately represented. Side wall detail is molded on the inside of the fuselage halves. Eduard did something interesting here, as the area that will be visible through the cockpit openings is actually molded thinner than the rest of the fuselage, giving it a more "in scale" appearance. This is a well thought out design.

The engine is represented by seven pieces, but this is only the only the portion above the block. In 1/72 this probably will not be noticeable. I think that we can forgive Eduard a shortcut here. There are two different styles of exhaust given here, as these types of details were different from aircraft to aircraft on the original subject.

One of the signature features of the real airplane is well represented in this kit. That is the corrugated metal of the wings and tailplane. It is probably not true to scale (it would be very small in 1/72), but it is delicate and represents the look that the metal would have had much in the same way that the hills and valleys usually seen on fabric surfaces in WWI kits are a bit exaggerated. Call it artistic license. The leading edges of the wings have a smooth area wrapping around from top to bottom, making it a easy to sand out the seams. The ailerons are separate pieces, allowing them to be positioned as desired. When the top wing is together, the size of this beast becomes very apparent. The span in 1/72 is nearly nine inches.

The attachment of the upper wing will be the one area that may be difficult for the builder. There are eight struts that hold the upper wing in place. They are all separate pieces, and the angle of attachment is not evident from the instructions. A little drilling of the locator holes to deepen them, some superglue and a lot of test fitting are required to make this area work. If the Windsock Datafile (#39) on the Junkers is available, it would help with locating the struts.

Additional details are all well done. The landing gear is appropriately sturdy, and will be a snap to put together after dealing with the wing. There are two different styles each of the horizontal and vertical stabilizers, matched to the different color schemes provided. The observer's Parabellum machine gun and ring round out the external detail.

There are two color schemes provided, one in medium green over light blue from Fl Abt (A) 217 from 1918. The other is camouflaged in mauve and green over light blue, but the unit is not identified. Both of these schemes are illustrated in the aforementioned Windsock Datafile, so it appears that Eduard have done their homework. The decals are very thin and in register. If this follows the example of other Eduard kits, the decals are printed by Propagteam.

This kit is definitely a welcome surprise to World War I modelers. It has not been kitted by a mainstream manufacturer before, and represents a significant airplane from the early days of aviation. This aircraft, after all, was a predecessor to the more famous Junkers ground attack aircraft, the Ju-87 Stuka of World War II.

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