

The Kora Beneš-Mráz Be-550 "Bibi" – Kit review

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Kora Models kit number 7261 **Beneš-Mráz Be-550 "Bibi"**. 1/72 kit, containing 16 resin parts, a vacformed canopy, decals and a printed instrument panel. Produced by Kora Models, J. Wolkera 874, 756 61 Roznov p. R., Czech Republic, www.lfmodels.cz/kora (e-mail; kora-models@post.cz, phone and fax: +420 651 657624).



History

The Czechoslovak manufacturer Beneš-Mráz produced a series of light side-by-side two-seater "tourist" aircraft in the 1930's. The design and manufacture was undertaken at Choceň by Pavel Beneš and Jaroslav Mráz. The first of the "Bibi" series was the Be-501 in 1936. This was followed, later in 1936, by the Be-550, which was a much more streamlined machine. Following further development a much modified and more powerful version, the Be-555 "Superbibi", was introduced in 1938. WWII must have seen the closure of this small aircraft company.

The subject of the kit, OK-BET, was registered on September 22nd, 1937 and removed from the register (scrapped or destroyed) on January 10th, 1940. OK-BET was used as a racer – it won the Czechoslovak National Flight in 1937 (a race held every year in Czechoslovakia - a smaller version of the European Challenge). In 1938, OK-BET finished 9th in the Small Treaty Race,

outclassed by much more powerful military planes. There were four Be-550s on the Czechoslovak register, and at least two were sold abroad, one to Egypt and the other to Britain (G-AGSR, subject of a sister kit, number 7265).

The Be-550 had a span of 11.50 m and a length of 7.15 m. The engine was a 62 hp Walter Micron II, which gave a maximum speed of 190 km/h, a ceiling of 4000 m and a maximum range of 700 km.

The kit

The fuselage is a one-piece casting into which the cockpit detail is fitted from above. The interior consists of seven parts: two seats, two sticks, the rudder pedal assembly, the instrument panel and a piece that fits behind the seats. There are no location pegs or drawings, but I guess these things can hardly be fitted in more than one place. The double pair of rudder pedals have to be removed from a resin block, and I suspect it might be easier to scratchbuild them. There are no painting instructions, so you will have to invent some interior colours that match the cream and "wine red" exterior.

The tail surfaces are thin and sharp and have nice fabric detail, but have to be removed from casting blocks. The wing is also thin and clean, but there will be some gaps to fill where it joins the fuselage – nothing difficult though, since there are no sculpted fairings. The rather tiny landing gear looks good.

The canopy is clear, but a little bit wavy. The final details include some impossibly small parts that have to be removed from pouring blocks, such as the tailwheel (or is it the venturi – I'm not sure, one of them is missing!) and a little scoop. These parts will be much easier to scratchbuild.

This is a sharply cast, neat little kit of little known, but rather pretty between-the-wars type. It should go together quite easily. The decal sheet, printed by Tally Ho, looks very good - sharp and thin. I must admit that I don't have any references at all about this plane, but at least the dimensions are right.

*Thanks to **Kora Models** for the review kit, and to **Václav Hochmuth** and **Geoff Trenholme** for help with facts!*