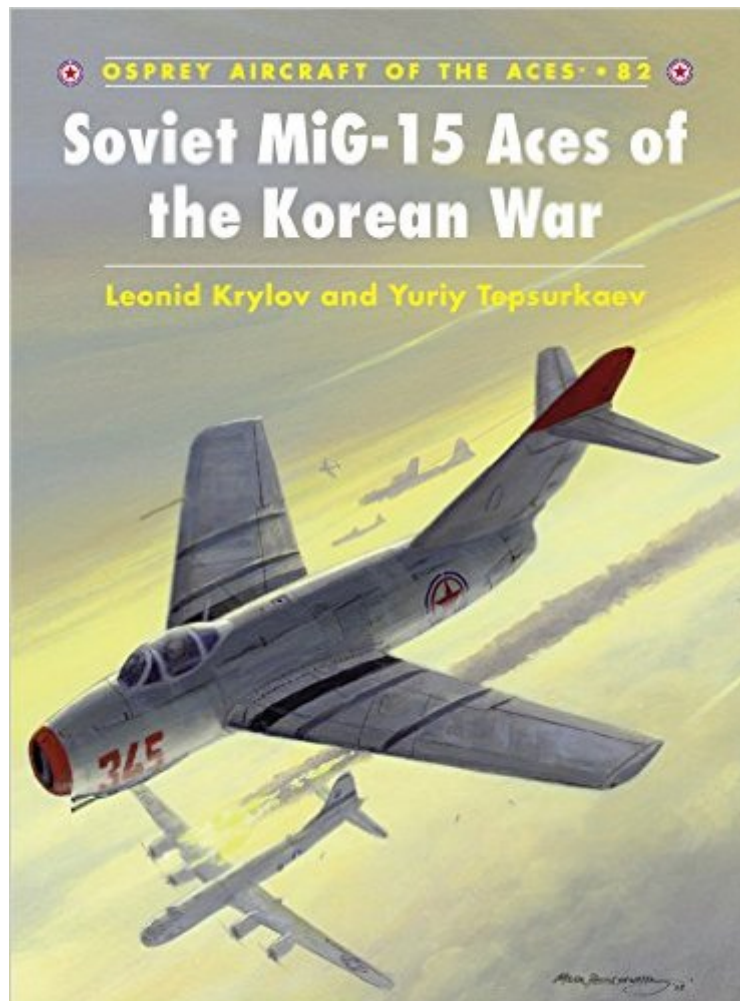


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# Soviet MiG-15 Aces Of The Korean War (Aircraft Of The Aces)



## Synopsis

The Soviet Union began assisting the People's Republic of China in its establishment of a modern air force in 1950, when Soviet Air Force regiments were sent to train local pilots. China's involvement in the Korean War in late October 1950 inevitably drew Soviet pilots into the war. A total of 52 Soviet pilots scored five or more victories in the Korean War. The history of these covert actions has been a long-buried secret and this book will be the first English publication to detail the only instance when the Cold War between Russia and the US became "hot." This book uncovers Soviet combat experiences during the Korean War from detailed unit histories and rare first-hand accounts. With access to extensive Russian archives, the authors offer an enthralling insight into an air war that has been largely covered up and neglected, illustrated with previously unpublished photographs and detailed full-color profiles.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The book seems to be very well researched, with first hand sources. The book has a major oversight, there are no operational maps! It makes it difficult to follow where the events are happening. The author made an effort to cross reference the sources of the air to air kills, from both US and Soviet, PLAAF, and North Korean. There are lots of good color MiG-15 plates. I highly recommend it if you are interested in the "other sides" experience.

Back in September 2006, when I reviewed Warren Thompson's F-86 SABRE ACES OF THE 4TH

FIGHTER WING, I commented that it would be great if Osprey had a "MiG-15 Aces of the Korean War" book in the works. Well, here 'tis...and not only is Leonid Krylov's book interesting but it's sure to be controversial as well. Russia committed many MiG-15 units to the Korean conflict. It's only recently that details of this large-scale but top-secret involvement has been documented. SOVIET MiG-15 ACES OF THE KOREAN WAR is based on 17 years of research in Russian archives and interviews with 64th Fighter Air Corps pilots. First of all, Krylov does an admirable job of relating the Korean air battles from the Soviet side including many first-hand reminiscences and combat reports. By war's end 52 Soviet MiG-15 pilots claimed five or more kills, 13 of those claimed ten or more victories. In terms of F-86s alone, those MiG pilots were credited with downing 574 Sabres while losing 335 MiGs in return...and therein lies the rub. According to USAF sources, F-86s downed over 790 MiG-15s while losing 78 Sabres in return. 78 losses vs. 574 claims; 790 claims vs. 335 losses; hmm!?! If you factor in Chinese MiGs downed by F-86s, you'll probably get close to the 790 American claims but how to reconcile the 78/574 figures?!? In truth, Krylov's book could be subtitled: "Few of These Losses Tally with USAF Figures." To his credit, Krylov, time and again, points out the disparity between Soviet and American claims/loss figures but the overall impression is one of tremendous overclaiming by the Soviets. Pilots such as Oskin, Pepelyaev, Sutyagin, Shchukin and Kramarenko were obviously skilled pilots; some had been aces in WWII. They obviously triumphed over some USAF F-86 pilots - including a few top aces - but it will take monumental research to come to a final, accurate Korean air war tally. In the meantime, SOVIET MiG-15 ACES OF THE KOREAN WAR is a good start; an obviously well-researched and well-written overview of the topic. It includes over 70 rare photographs of pilots, aircraft and gun-camera scenes. (Given the awful footage MiG-15 gun-cameras produced, it's no wonder there is such overclaiming!) Yuriy Tepsurkaev also contributes nine pages of nicely done color profiles. I would have loved an index and also a map since the MiG pilots kept referring to Korea Bay, Cape Unzenly, etc. Short and sweet summary: Highly recommended.

This is an excellent look at the MiG pilots who flew aircraft marked as PLA and North Korean fighters. During the Cold War the USSR never acknowledged the involvement of its pilots in Korea (despite the fact that Russian voice intercepts were monitored during aerial combat) and public acknowledgement of their accomplishments were not made. Many of these pilots were WWII veterans who had gained notoriety fighting the Luftwaffe. For the first time we learn the names of many of these pilots, we see their pictures and we learn what units they were assigned to. The artwork illustrating the paint schemes on the MiG-15s flown during the war is very well done as well.

It's a pity that no map is included to outline the operational areas where the MiGs flew. Also, the Russian author never discusses the REASON for the secrecy surrounding these pilots or the great lengths the Soviets went to perpetuate the cover story that North Korean and Chinese pilots against UN forces. Political constraints put artificial limitations on the Soviet pilots, preventing them from flying over areas in which they might be captured if shot down. I would have liked to have learned what the pilots thought of all this. Nevertheless, a very good book.

This book provides one of our first detailed - WONDERFULLY detailed - looks at Russian Mig pilots in the Korean War, including marvelous first hand accounts of combat as well as excellent unit records. This is the first book on the subject that I've ever seen with this level of detail - it wasn't long ago when the Russians wouldn't even ACKNOWLEDGE they had pilots in Korea. When reading this book, it's important to keep in mind that Krylov and Tepsurkaev probably had to secure the goodwill of their Russian sources in order to get such great access. Obviously, these pilots aren't going to grant interviews to someone planning a hatchet job on their military careers. Thus, the reader shouldn't be surprised that the narrative advocates and honors not just the pilots themselves, but also their interpretation of the war. Thus, you will not see any mention that these guys weren't "supposed" to be there while at the same time field a lot of strident complaints about US conduct and kill claims (I still wonder why excess US claims couldn't have been North Korean or Chinese pilots?) This "bias" may be irritating to some, but the first person accounts and detailed Russian records make it a price abundantly worth paying. Furthermore, the authors weave their way through this political minefield by diligently researching and cross referencing both US and Russian records for every encounter. The results are a rather embarrassing parade of inflated claims by both sides, with people becoming great heroes and aces for stuff that simply didn't happen. Both sides were struggling to adapt to the new speed and range of jet combat, with afterburner smoke all too often being mistaken for a dying aircraft. If you haven't read Osprey books of this kind, you have to keep in mind that these books are about records, photos and paint schemes first and literature second. However, for those who want something dramatic, visceral insight is actually very easy to get: just skip to ANYTHING written in quotes. There you'll find a wealth of white knuckle accounts as flesh and blood as any: "There was no way out. I headed right into the shell bursts. The aircraft shook and was thrown from side to side as if it were taxiing on cobblestones. I gripped the control column tightly and sat there more dead than alive..." Obviously, the majority of encounters don't have the benefit of a personal interview, and are thus just what can be gleaned from combat reports: "Having fought his way past eight escorting Sabres, Snr Lt Evgeniy Stelmakh

single-handedly attacked four B-29s and managed to shoot one of them down..."If you want to actually decipher who was where when, I strongly recommend that first you download a few maps of Korea. Even so, the majority of the book is a torrent of facts, names and unit numbers, and if you're not writing things down it'll make your head spin: "17th and 523rd IAPs joined battle with the attacking fighter-bombers, while 14 MiGs from 18th GvIAP, which had climbed to 10,000 m (32,500 ft), were directed towards the B-29s..."I truly feel this book is a fabulous, ground breaking first step towards an understanding of Russian pilots in the Korean War, and with the aforementioned caveats in mind, it can serve you wonderfully no matter what your interest. Here is where its true wealth lies.

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