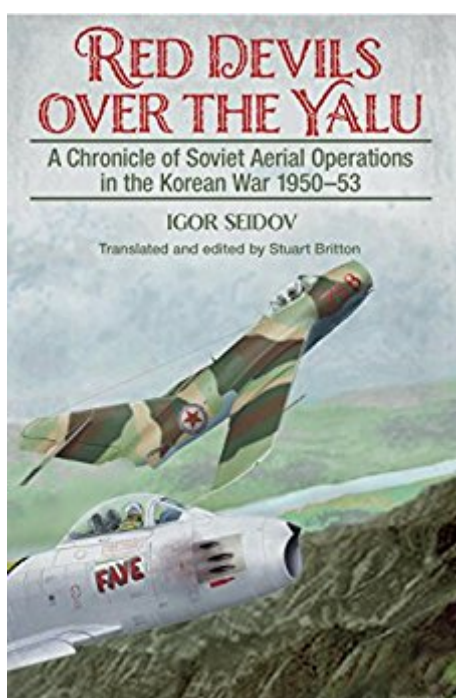


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Red Devils Over The Yalu: A Chronicle Of Soviet Aerial Operations In The Korean War 1950-53 (Helion Studies In Military History)



Synopsis

The Korean War (1950-1953) was the first - and only - full-scale air war in the jet age. It was in the skies of North Korea where Soviet and American pilots came together in fierce aerial clashes. The best pilots of the opposing systems, the most powerful air forces, and the most up-to-date aircraft in the world in this period of history came together in pitched air battles. The analysis of the air war showed that the powerful United States Air Force and its allies were unable to achieve complete superiority in the air and were unable to fulfill all the tasks they'd been given. Soviet pilots and Soviet jet fighters, which were in no way inferior to their opponents and in certain respects were even superior to them, was the reason for this. The combat experience and new tactical aerial combat tactics, which were tested for the first time in the skies of Korea, have been eagerly studied and applied by modern air forces around the world today. This book fully discusses the Soviet participation in the Korean War and presents a view of this war from the opposite side, which is still not well known in the West from the multitude of publications by Western historians. The reason for this, of course, is the fact that Soviet records pertaining to the Korean War were for a long time highly classified, since Soviet air units were fighting in the skies of North Korea "incognito", so to speak or even more so to write about this was strictly forbidden in the Soviet Union right up to its ultimate collapse. The given work is in essence the first major work in the post-Soviet era. First published in a small edition in Russian in 1998, it was republished in Russia in 2007. For the first time, the Western reader can become acquainted with the most detailed and informative work existing on the course of the air war from the Soviet side, now in English language. The work rests primarily on the recollections of veterans of this war on the so-called 'Red' side - Soviet fighter pilots, who took direct part in this war on the side of North Korea. Their stories have been supplemented with an enormous amount of archival documents, as well as the work of Western historians. The author presents a literal day-by-day chronicle of the aerial combats and combat work of Soviet fighter regiments in the period between 1950 and 1953, and dedicates this work to all the men on both sides who fought and died in the Korean air war.

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Customer Reviews

This is a long, long book. In it the Korean air war is painstakingly detailed, dogfight after dogfight until it becomes confusing and repetitive. Text is tiresome, as is commonly the favorite style in former communist countries. Lets be honest: If you are looking for a particular combat or casualty, its there. The book is for scholars particularly interested in this particular war. The author insists that the fight was not as one sided as US propaganda at the time insisted. He is probably right, at least in part. In all air wars, both sides tend to exaggerate victories, in most cases in good faith. In the book, It is the sheer volume of data that overwhelmed me, it may not be necessarily the case of many other readers.

I am very glad that I read the other reviews and purchased this book. As one of the reviewers stated, this book is not written in the traditional manner, but is instead a day to day chronicle of the war from the Soviet perspective. It was because of this review that I bought the book. I am more interested in seeing the war from the Soviet side, and how they conducted their operations, than I am in the claim vs loss mythologies of either side, because there are other mythologies about the Korean Air War that interest me more, such as the myth of the Communist base sanctuary. The only way in which the Communist bases were a sanctuary was that they were not bombed and strafed. Violations of the border were more frequent than previously thought, because of very loose interpretation of the USAF's hot pursuit rules, and the secretive Maple Special missions, which were intended violations of the border to hunt Migs, so any book that gives me a day to day experience of the war from the point of view of the Communist side is a must have, In one way the UN bases were more of a sanctuary than the Communist bases, because Sabre pilots did not have to take off, or

land, with Communist jets in the midst of their formations, and, for me, this fact goes a long way toward explaining why the constantly debated victory to loss ratios would favor the American side, even when the aircraft were being flown by pilots of relatively even caliber. This book is dry, so if you're looking for a pulse pounding story you're not going to find it here, but if, like me, you want to gain some perspective of what this highly mythologized war was like for the other side, you really have to read this book.

Excellent first hand accounts revealed on the roles the Soviet Pilots played during the Korean Conflict. First time I have been able to see what it was like to fly the Mig 15 vs our F 86 from the other sides perspectives. Great proving ground for the Russians. Brian Black, CPT US Army Retired.

very interesting to see the Russian view

Seidov's book is a very useful addition to the literature of the Korean air war, and should be consulted by anyone interested in the first jet-vs.-jet air war. His book benefits from his unique access to former Soviet records and MiG veterans. Readers should read this, and also Xiaoming Zhang's earlier *Red Wings Over the Yalu* (Texas A&M Press), and Kenneth Werrell's *Sabres Over MiG Alley* (Smithsonian Institution Press) to get the complete Soviet-Chinese-American story of the Sabre-vs.-MiG air war.

As advertised, on time

This is an extremely unusual book. First it was written in Russian and translated, so it has an odd style. Second, the Russian author is attempting to give credit to the Soviet pilots who served in the Korean War and refute the 60-year-old idea that they were on the short end of a 10:1 kill ratio and thereby restore honor to their efforts. The book ends with a sincere and stirring exhortation that we must honor these men and their sacrifices, and even though that was written for his Russian readers, as an American in the tradition of Moore's *We Were Soldiers Once...and Young: Ia Drang - The Battle That Changed the War in Vietnam* and William Broyles' *Brothers in Arms*, I can't argue with that. But what is really unusual about this book is the format. I was expecting the typical sort of military survey, with various chapters on the opponents, their training, their equipment, some tables and charts, some line drawings of airplanes, some maps, lists of air bases, etc., alongside some representative combat accounts. This is not that at all. The book is one long, continuous,

530-page day-by-day narration of the air war, June 25, 1950 to July 27 1953, painstaking detailed, every engagement told one at a time until all of a day's actions are tallied, and then the next paragraph begins: "On the next day..." There are a few small photographs, mostly of pilots, five small tables, and two appendices, both lists of killed Soviet pilots. No maps, no line drawings, no performance figures for the opposing aircraft. For his conclusion, where he tallies up and compares Soviet losses and US losses, he doesn't even start a new chapter. He just starts a new paragraph: "The results of the 64th IAK's pilots..." This is not what you're used to, but it is one of the most impressive unremitting efforts of documentation you will ever see. For each of those 1125+ days he lists every plane engaged, their units, the names of their crews, the aircraft serial numbers as well as first-hand tactical narration from the Soviet participants. His point at the end is to show that the Soviets shot down a lot more of our planes than US records admit, and he is NOT going to give you a chance to say, "yeah, his documentation is spotty." There is nothing spotty about this book. After each engagement he lists the Soviet loss records for that day alongside the US loss records, sees if they agree or not. If you don't like his conclusion, you are absolutely free to look up the US records and see what they say about F-86F-30 No. 52-4340, 12th FBS/18th FBW flown by Harry H. Porter, because it is all in there. Once the narration ends, the tallying begins and goes on for 15 pages of continuous paragraphs of numbers of F-86s and F-80s and F4Us and B-29s and RB-45s and Meteors shot down by Soviet pilots, Soviet AA units, Chinese pilots and AA units, and North Korean pilots and AA units. Here is where the book gets hard to follow, because the dense paragraphs of numbers start to become repetitive, and you will need a pad of paper to start making your own tables, because he doesn't give you many. But you can't say he doesn't give you anything to work with. He gives you all the raw material you need to see if you agree with his conclusion, but you feel less convinced by a thesis than you do buried under a landslide of 545 pages of numbers and you can only say, "Okay, you're right, I surrender." This is not the American style of sparkling insight, glib articulation, and soaring arguments. It is the industrial attrition warfare of amassing every scrap of data and crushing you with it. It may not be slick, but it is an amazing, impressive, peculiarly Soviet accomplishment nonetheless. And it can be the source of endless follow-up research to stack it up against US records, other recent scholarship by RAND and others, and confirm that he didn't just make all that stuff up. I don't know about you, but I'm thinking of taking his word for it.

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