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Air Combat Over The Eastern Front And Korea: A Soviet Fighter Pilot Remembers (The Red Air Force At War)



Synopsis

Sergei Kramarenko was a lucky man. As a Soviet fighter pilot, an ace, he fought in two wars - first against the Luftwaffe, then the US Air Force - and survived. This is his story. On the Eastern Front in the bitter conflict with the Germans, he dueled with Messerschmitt 109s and Focke-Wulf 190s. Then, in Korea, flying a MiG-15, he came up against the Americans, the British and the Australians, in the first fighter-against-fighter clashes of the jet age. His accounts of combat against the F-86 Sabres, F-84 Thunderjets and Gloster Meteors are among the most vivid and remarkable of his long career. In over ten years of as a front-line fighter pilot he took part in a revolution in the development of combat flying. His candid, intensely personal and unflinching account gives a rare inside view of life in the Red Air Force.

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Customer Reviews

A Stunning collection of Allied airmen's first hand wartime experiences|For its variety of air action and inspiring human courage, this title is unlikely to be bettered and should be on every bookshelf of those with an interest in the Korean air war. (Airfix Model World)

The whole world, and even most U.S. Air Force pilots (I am one, retired after 25+ years.) had no idea of the great involvement of the air force of the Soviet Union in the Korean War. This book corrects the problem, and thus it is historically very important. Kramarenko was a superb professional military pilot, much like me and the best of my peers. I would love to buy him a beer, or

a tall vodka if he wished, and talk over experiences that were of professional interest to both of us. Bill Rees, Lt. Col. USAF (Ret.)

I was really looking forward to this book! I'd had it on pre-order with since it first showed up. So little has been written from the viewpoint of the Soviet aviator... almost nothing for the "Great Patriotic War" despite the numbers involved and until this book I am unaware of anything written about the Korean air war from their point of view. That being said, I guess I'll just have to keep waiting. My objections to this book are many, I'll just hit the highlights. First off, as a retired tactical aviator myself, an avid reader of history and an amateur historian I am very much aware that in the "heat"/stress of combat claims get inflated. This is not usually an overt lie or even an attempt to enhance one's reputation or standing, but an honest opinion of what happened, a human brain taking a millisecond snapshot of events several hours old, all jumbled together with other targets, radio calls, navigating, trying to keep your inexperienced wingman alive and oh yes... people trying to kill you. You don't have to read much to realize that all sides, in all wars, over-claim. The common wisdom is by an approximate amount of 2-to-1; half of what is claimed will get you in the ballpark of what really happened (they even teach this in US intel school). You don't have to do too much research to realize that three groups grossly over-claimed far beyond the standard 2-to-1. They were: the American bomber crews, the Japanese, and the Communists. The first group is easy to understand... one F-109 slices through a bomber box, thirty gunners from twelve B-17's blaze away at it and it goes down smoking... ten gunners file a claim for a definite kill. The latter two groups, I'm not so sure about, write it off to Bushido/Socialist zeal... but one thing is certain with any of the three groups, if their claims had been accurate they would've wiped out their competition years before the war really ended. So I was expecting a little, shall we say, exaggeration, but I got a lot more than I bargained for. At the rate the author and his Comrades (with a capital "C") were slaughtering Sabres we must've had at least 10 full fighter wings over there, just to furnish them with targets. (In reality there were only two, the 4th and the 51st). Even the Chi-com units that the author admits were woefully inexperienced wiped the poorly flown Sabres from the sky. In one battle our intrepid aviator and his band of aces managed to shoot down more Meteors than were actually in the air that day... neat trick. But the worst was just the insulting dogma. B-29's that almost exclusively attacked the peace loving people of North Korea, and killed mostly the old, the infirm, and of course, women and children. The Americans that were too stupid to realize that you had to lead a target to hit it, so if a pipper crossed a MiG on a gun camera shot that's all we needed to claim a kill. Don't forget the American leadership that didn't let its pilots know that they were flying against Russian pilots (even

though to give credit where it's due the translator here includes a note saying that the US pilots were well aware of who they were up against). Finally, one point that just really bothered me for its blind stupidity was the author's multiple references to the fact that he/they flew bright aluminum aircraft implying that the craven UN forces hid behind camouflage paint trying to avoid combat. Really? Look through a picture book on the Korean War and see how many camouflaged UN aircraft you see. Silver F-86's with bright yellow stripes, silver Meteors, silver F-84's with red-striped tails, heck, even the lowly T-6 "mosquito" FACs were silver, most with bright red, white and blue stripes. This almost had me questioning whether the author was even there. Undoubtedly the MiG-15 was a huge shock to the US and UN forces fighting in the Korean conflict. It was a great airplane and when flown by a well trained pilot was a powerful opponent. Its heavy cannons with relatively low rates of fire, were much better suited for knocking down bombers than agile fighters, and did indeed take a terrible toll of our B-29's, forcing them to abandon daylight raids. And our pilots were very much aware that on occasion they encountered enemy pilots (usually Soviet) who were vastly superior to the majority of the enemy they fought (they called them "honchos" as correctly noted by the translator). All that said I was left very disappointed and glad to be done with the book. The author is supposedly working on a history of his Fighter Regiment... I'll pass.

The Soviet Union may be gone, but it lives on in the author of this trash! Without rehashing all the errors and falsehoods in this book (see previous review), suffice it to say it is completely worthless as a history or memoir. The author did no research to verify his 'story', only repeating Soviet cold war propaganda. If there is an honest account by a Russian fighter pilot in World War 2 or Korea I have yet to find it. It seems you can take the man out of the Soviet Union, but you can't take the Soviet Union out of the man.

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