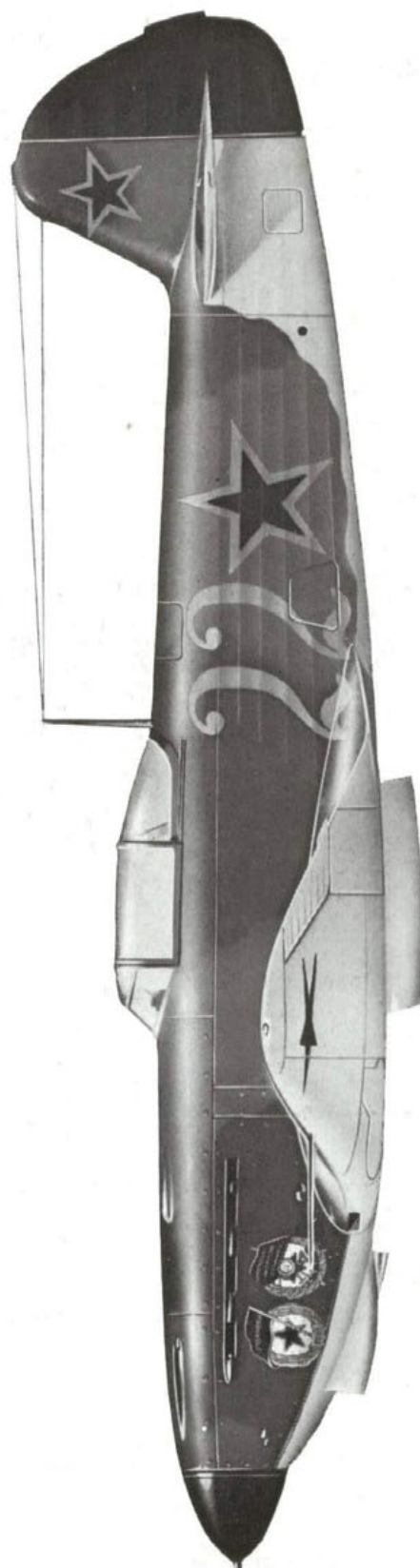


**PROFILE
PUBLICATIONS**

The
Yak 9
Series

NUMBER

185





Guards Unit
insignia

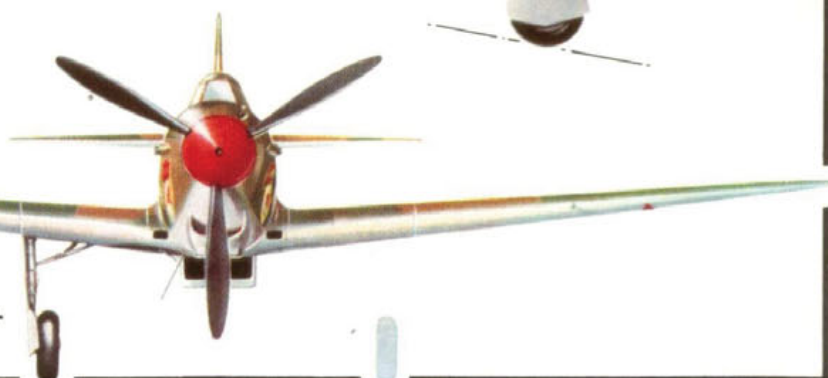


Victory tally on
fin



Order of the Red
Banner (Military)

YAKOVLEV YAK 9D flown
by M. V. Avdyeyev during operations
over Sevastopol, Crimea, in May 1944. At this time
Avdyeyev was an Escadra commander in an unidentified
Guards Fighter Regiment; he ended the war as a Guards
Colonel with command of a Soviet Air Force fighter regi-
ment, 15 confirmed kills, and the Gold Star of a Hero of
the Soviet Union.



by Witold Liss



The Yak 9 Series

This well-known photograph shows a formation of Yak-9D's of a Guards Regiment; the aircraft in the foreground carries both the Guards Regiment badge and the insignia of the Order of the Red Banner (see five-aspect painting on facing page).

(Photo: V. Nemecek)

During World War Two Yakovlev fighters earned the distinction of being the most widely used "work-horses" on the Eastern Front. They entered service just as the war began but unlike their counterparts, the I-16's and the MiG fighters, they continued to serve long after hostilities ended, not only in the V.-V.S. but also in Poland, Yugoslavia and elsewhere. Furthermore, they took part in the first phase of the Korean conflict, meeting in combat their one-time allies the P-51 and F4U. Then came the MiG-15 and the career of the "single figure" Yak fighters ended. The reason for their longevity was that they were simple, cheap but effective and—most important—had considerable development potential.

Hampered by a permanent shortage of basic industrial materials and built almost exclusively under hard Siberian winter conditions, the Yak-9 looked crude by Western standards—and compared with any Western fighter it was crude—but it was very reliable. Moreover, for classic air combat on the Eastern Front, where battles were usually fought at heights below 5,000 m. (16,400 ft.) the Yak-9 reigned supreme, none of its opponents being able to match its speed and manoeuvrability low down.

All pre-war and wartime Yak aircraft were designed by a team led by Alexander Syergyeyevitch Yakovlev, second only to Tupolev's giant design team in size. Yakovlev himself was born in Moscow in 1906 and had his first practical experience in aircraft construction in 1923 when he helped to build a glider. In the late 1920's, with the assistance of Government members K. Voroshylov and A. Mikoyan, he established an aircraft plant in a small barracks in Moscow. Eventually, on and around the same site, a vast new Yakovlev aircraft factory arose—one of the three largest aircraft factories in Western Russia.

DESIGN HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT

In 1938 the Russian Government issued a speci-

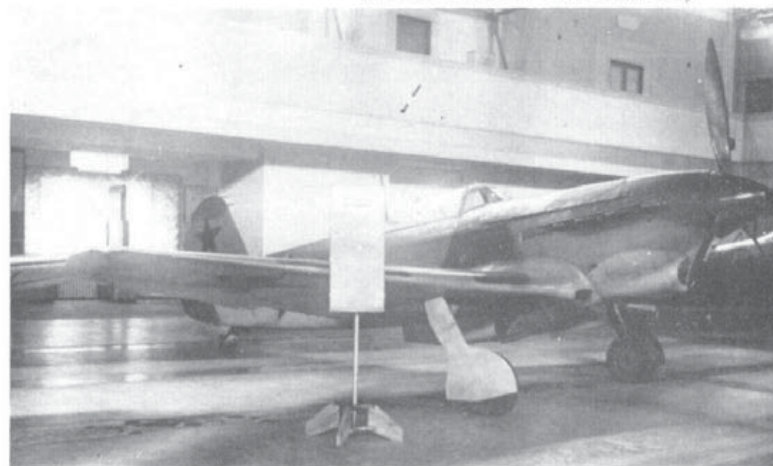
fication for a first-line fighter to replace the ageing Polikarpov I-16 (see *Profile* No. 122) and Yakovlev was one of those who tendered for a contract. His I-26 (later to become the Yak-1) was one of three competing designs chosen for prototype construction.* The Yak-1 first flew in March 1939 and made such a good impression on V.-V.S. leaders during early tests that on 27th April 1939 Voroshilov and Stalin approved a proposal that Yakovlev be awarded the Order of Lenin, a Zis car and 100,000 roubles. The following day the award was bestowed on Yakovlev by the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. and he became Hero of Socialist Labour.

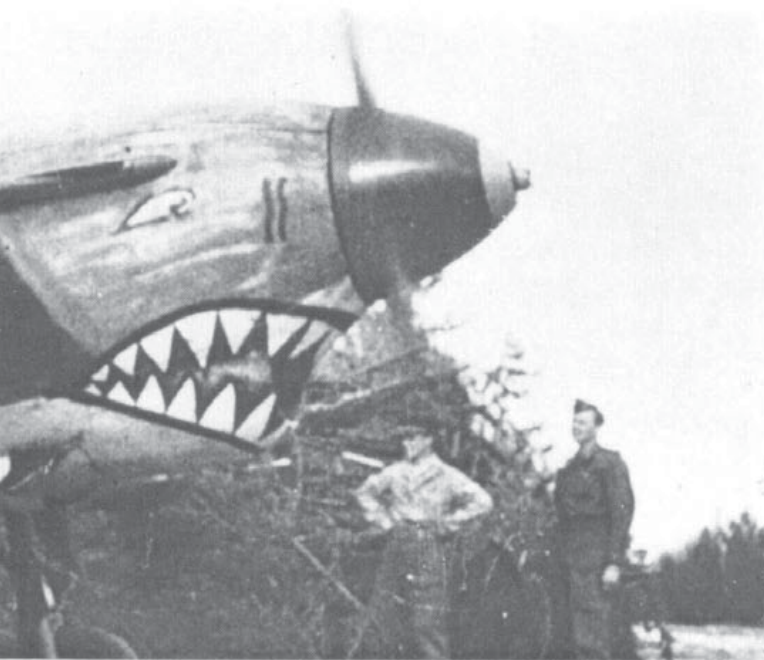
The Yak-1 was immediately ordered into large-scale production and such was the apparent rate of progress that on 1st May 1940 the first unit equipped with these fighters took part in the traditional May Day fly-past over Moscow's Red Square. In fact,

* The others were Mikoyan and Gurevitch's I-61 (later MiG-1) and Lavochkin's I-22 (later the LaGG-3).

This museum specimen of the Yak-9 shows details of the engine cowling and exhausts, and the undercarriage doors.

(Photo: Miss J. P. Alexander)





Close-up of the nose marking of a Yak-9M of the Normandie-Niemen Regiment; this volunteer unit carried shark's teeth decoration during 1943-44.

production of the Yak-1 was painfully slow at first, the factory's employees being unaccustomed to working to the relatively high tolerances and precise standards that their task demanded. Also, as is not unusual with new aircraft, the Yak-1 suffered its share of teething troubles—mainly stemming from faulty attachment of the M-105P engine to the bearers. These troubles still occurred when the Yak-1 was in squadron service but by the autumn of 1941 they were overcome and the type quickly became a proven weapon. To meet a demand from front-line units for a fighter-bomber, the manufacturers equipped the Yak-1 with underwing racks for bombs or RS 82 rockets.

When the Yak-1 began to enter service in large numbers, the I-16UTI was no longer suitable for conversion training and a two-seat training version of the Yak-1 was therefore evolved. As the Yak-1 was now being fitted with an improved engine, the M-105PF, the new fighter trainer—the Yak-7V, or Yak-7U as it later became—was powered by this engine also. Yakovlev developed a new fighter variant of the Yak-1, with a cut-down rear fuselage and an all-round-vision cockpit canopy, designated the Yak-1M. About this time the need arose for an effective single-seat night-fighter, so Yakovlev removed the second cockpit from the Yak-7U, increased the armament and thus produced the Yak-7A. The Yak-7A and the Yak-1M contributed in turn to another variant, the Yak-7B.

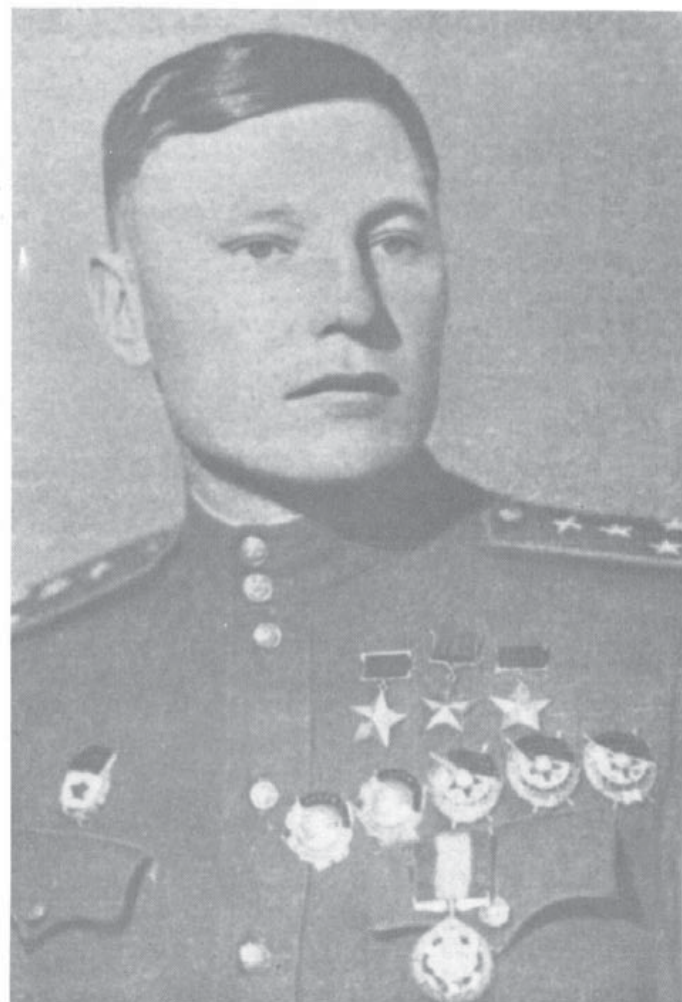
All these machines were built in the traditional manner, i.e. of wood and fabric, with light alloys used only where absolutely essential. However, towards the end of 1942 light alloys became more readily obtainable and Yakovlev took advantage of this to improve the Yak-7B. As metal spars allowed space in the wing for extra fuel tanks, they were introduced in the new model, the Yak-7DI *Distantnyonnyi Istrebityel*—long range fighter). Only a few Yak-7DI's were built as Yakovlev quickly introduced a slightly improved model designated Yak-9. First examples of the Yak-9 left the assembly lines in December 1942 and, armed with 20 mm. cannon and a 12.7 mm. BS machine-gun, the type first went into action in the

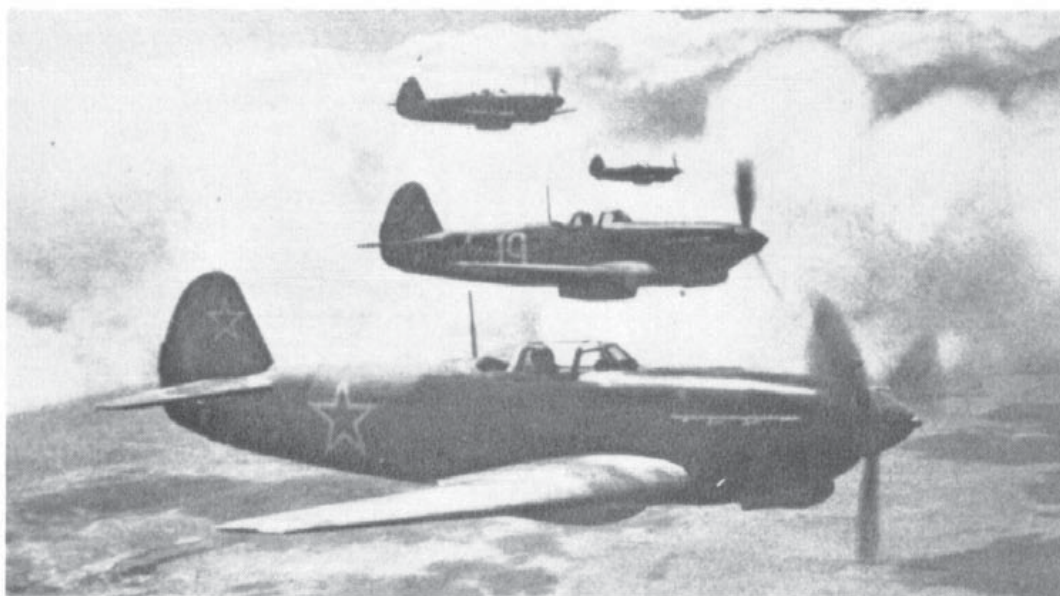
Stalingrad area together with the La-5.

The early variants were designated Yak-9 (basic) and in May 1943 the Yak-9M (Modified) entered production; this model had an additional 12.7 mm BS machine-gun in the upper fuselage decking. Almost simultaneously came the Yak-9B (*Bombovoy*—bomber) with Yak-9 (basic) armament and an internal fuselage bomb-bay for 450 kg. (992 lb.) of bombs. Both the Yak-9M and the Yak-9B went into really large-scale production. State Factory No. 153 directed by Lisicin and built "from scratch" east of the Urals in 1942, after the dispersal of the aircraft industry, doubled its output producing twice as many Yak-9's in 1943, as Yak-1's and -7's combined in 1942. The introduction of the Yak-9 resulted in a 150 per cent increase in fighter production in 1943 and this same factory, No. 153, produced no less than 1,500 Yak-9M's in the first three months of 1945. Both the Yak-9M and (albeit in smaller numbers) the Yak-9B, became the most commonly used fighters on the Eastern Front, numerically far outstripping the Lavochkins and MiGs.

Early in 1943 designers were invited to a conference at the Kremlin to discuss the possibilities of increasing the range of fighter aircraft. After obtaining a promise of increased supplies of light alloy for the aircraft industry, Yakovlev's team began work on a redesign of the Yak-9M, and by introducing larger fuel tanks of 650 litres (143 Imp. gallons) at the expense of some of the fixed armament, increased the range to 1,420 km. (882 ml.) with an endurance of four hours. The new model was designated Yak-9D (*Distantnyonnyi*—long range) and soon received even larger fuel tanks

One of the many Yak-9 aces, Alexandr Pokryshkin photographed during the war.





A zveno of V.-V.S. Yak-9's flying over the Volga region in 1943. (Passingham/Klepacki Collection).

introduction of the 45 mm. cannon in 1944, the Yak-9K was born, this variant being used in anti-tank and anti-shiping rôles. A few Yak-9K's were equipped with a 50 mm. anti-tank cannon but the recoil of this gun proved excessive for such a light aircraft and this idea was abandoned.

Yakovlev tried to introduce a third main variant of the Yak-9M—the Yak-9L (*Lyogkii*—

light) with reduced range and armament and a new engine (the supercharged M-105 PD). A small evaluation batch of Yak-9L's was built in 1944 but the type was not adopted for large-scale production because the Lavochkin La-7 (see *Profile* No. 149) proved to be more suitable for the interceptor rôle.

Meanwhile, Vladimir Klimov had designed and tested a new engine, the VK-107A (or M-107A), which offered 1,600 h.p. compared with the 1,260 h.p. of the M-105PF. It was of similar size to the M-105PF (but heavier) and offered the already-proven Yak-9 series a new lease of life. Thus it was that in the autumn of 1944, as the last Yak-1's and -7's were being withdrawn, a new fighter began to appear in the front-line units—the Yak-9U (*Ulutshennyi*—improved). This was of much cleaner outline than its lineal predecessors, having the oil cooler transferred from beneath the nose to the port wing root, the carburettor intake transferred to the starboard wing root, a more streamlined cockpit canopy and, most important of all, all-metal stressed-skin construction. The Yak-9U was first issued to Guards Units, one of them being the Guards Regiment commanded by A. Pokryshkin, three times Hero of the Soviet Union. The afore-mentioned changes increased the speed of the Yak-9 by 100 km./h. (62 m.p.h.) and reduced climbing time to 5,000 m. (16,400 ft.) by more than a minute. The Yak-9U, the final main variant of this famous line, became the standard multi-purpose fighter of the V.-V.S. and also of the Polish and



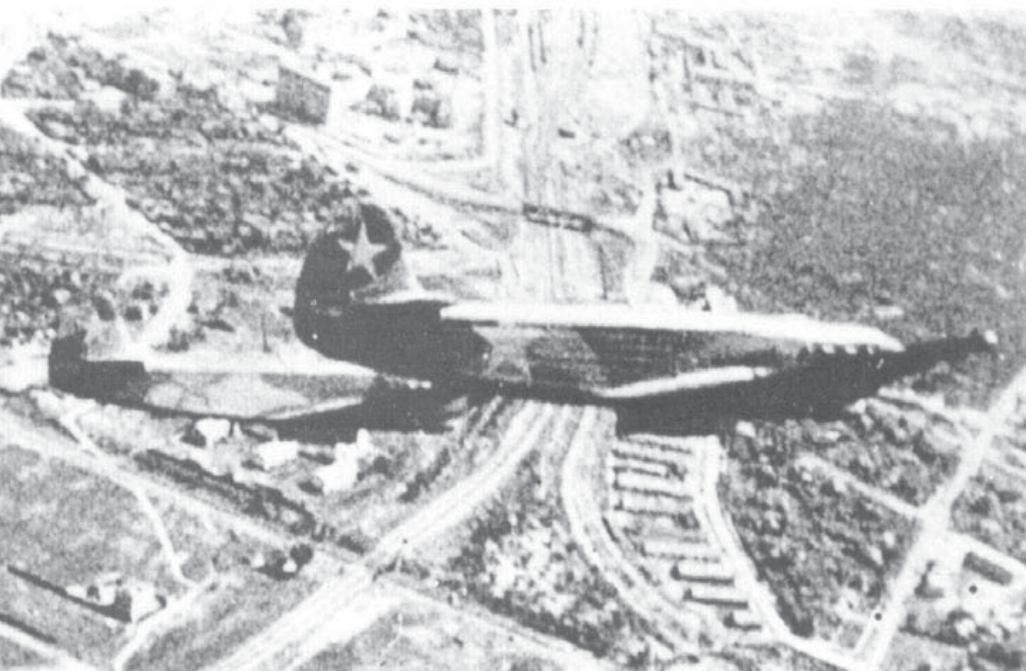
Details of a "speedbird" motif are shown in this interesting close-up. (Photo: Miss J. P. Alexander)

of 880 litres (194 Imp. gallons) capacity, plus an under-fuselage drop-tank increasing range to 2,200 km. (1,367 ml.) and necessitating the designation Yak-9DD (*Dalnodistsantsyonnyi*—very long range).

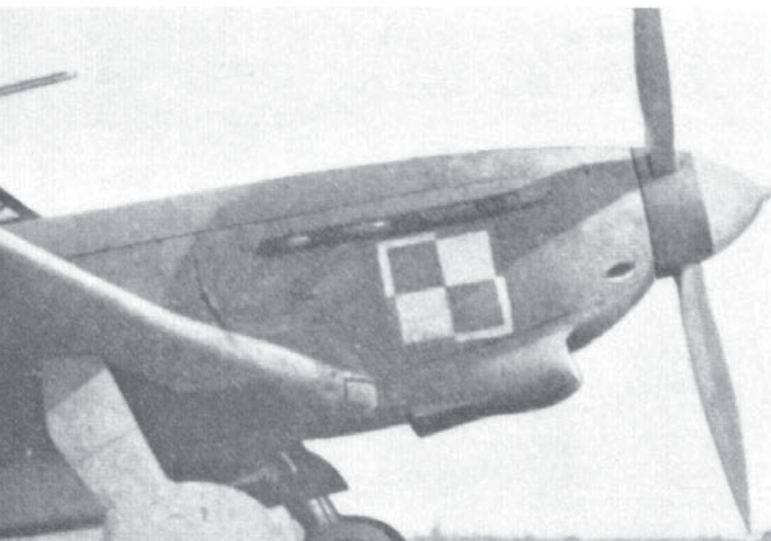
When the need arose for a ground-support fighter able to fight the new German tanks introduced in 1943/44, Yakovlev's answer was to adapt the Yak-9M by augmenting its armament. This development (which was parallel to the Yak-9D) received a new large-calibre weapon, developed by the Nudelmann-Suranov team in 1942, the 37 mm. NS 37 cannon; it also carried one 12.7 mm. BS machine-gun. As new cannon were in short supply, the Yak-9T (*Tankovoy*—tank) as this new variant was called, was often armed with the MPSH 20 mm., MP 23 mm. cannon or even the BS 12.7 mm. machine-gun in its propeller shaft instead of the 37 mm. cannon. Following the



Interesting photograph of a Yak-9 undergoing maintenance on a Russian airfield. The tri-colour bands on the spinner may signify the Normandie-Niemen unit. (Photo: Miss J. P. Alexander)



The quality of this print is poor but it does show details of an early camouflage scheme for the Yak-9; note the large stars. The cockpit canopies of these aircraft are open as they bank to attack a railway junction.



Close-up of the nose and insignia of a Yak-9M of a Polish unit.

North Korean Air Forces. At the end of World War Two, Yakovlev made some improvements to the Yak-9U, changing the R/T set and adding D/F equipment, and externally the final variant, the Yak-9P (*Pyerekhvatchik*—interceptor) differed from the -9U only in having a transparent D/F loop cover behind the cockpit. After the end of the war both the Yak-9U and -9P were referred to in the West as the Yak-11, the probable cause of this surmised designation being the change in outline in comparison with the standard Yak-9. (The true Yak-11 was a two-seat trainer which bore a close resemblance to the family but was in fact derived from the Yak-3, a direct development of the Yak-1M.)

After the war the Yugoslav designers Sivar, Znic and Popovic built a fighter which closely resembled the Yak-9 both externally and internally. This was their S49, powered by a 1,500 h.p. Hispano-Suiza 12Z, and its introduction during the 1950's coincided with the Yak-9's gradual withdrawal from service.

THE YAK-9 DESCRIBED

All versions of the Yak-9, except for the Yak-9U and -9P, were of mixed construction. The front fuselage structure was steel-framed and the remainder wooden with plywood and fabric covering in the initial batches

of Yak-9 (basic) aircraft, but later models had a fuselage built up with welded steel tube frames. The forward part of the fuselage, up to the rear edge of the cockpit, was dural-covered, while the rear fuselage was fabric-covered. The wing structure comprised two dural mainspars and wooden ribs, while the plywood skinning was covered with a formaldehyde-resin polish. The ailerons and tail control surfaces were fabric-covered. The flaps and undercarriage were hydraulically actuated. Depending on the version, the Yak-9 was powered by the M-

105PF or M-105PD with two-stage, two-speed compressors, or, in the case of the Yak-9U and -9P, the VK-107A. The M-105 engine drove a metal three-bladed VISH automatic propeller of three metres (9 ft. 10 in.) diameter and 130 kg. (287 lb.) weight. Fuel tanks were carried in the wings and their capacity varied from 450 litres (99 Imp. Galls.) in the Yak-9 (basic) to 880 litres (194 Imp. Galls.) in the Yak-9DD. Armament variations are dealt with below.

The following sections outline the variants of the basic design:—

Yak-9. Mixed construction, inwards-retracting undercarriage and enclosed cockpit with all-round-vision canopy. Powered by a 12-cylinder M-105PF 60° vee, in-line, liquid-cooled engine rated at 1,210 h.p. at 2,600 r.p.m. for take-off; nominal power, 1,260 h.p. at 800 m. (2,625 ft.), 1,180 h.p. at 2,700 m. (8,858 ft.)—all engine ratings at 1.43 atmospheres. Engine weight 614 kg. (1,354 lb.). Maximum internal fuel capacity 450 l. (99 I.G.) of 94 or 95 Octane rating. Armament comprised one 20 mm. ShVak cannon in the airscrew shaft and one 12.7 mm. UBS machine-gun in the upper fuselage decking. Maximum speed 592 km./h. (368 m.p.h.), economical cruise 260 km./h. (162 m.p.h.) at 3,000 m. (9,842 ft.), landing speed 120 km./h. (75 m.p.h.), climb to 5,000 m. (16,400 ft.) 4.9 min., range 910 km. (565 ml.), ceiling 10,000 m. (32,800 ft.), wingspan 10 m. (32 ft. 9¾ in.), length 8.55 m. (27 ft. 11½ in.), height 3 m. (9 ft. 10 in.), wing area 17.35 sq. m. (186.75 sq. ft.), loaded weight (with 450 l. fuel) 2,873 kg. (6,334 lb.).

Yak-9M. As Yak-9 but armed with a further 12.7 mm. UBS machine-gun. Empty weight 2,750 kg. (6,062 lb.), loaded weight 3,060 kg. (6,746 lb.), maximum speed 580 km./h. (360 m.p.h.) at 5,000 m. (16,400 ft.), 530 km./h. (329 m.p.h.) at 2,000 m. (6,562 ft.), 500 km./h. (311 m.p.h.) at sea level, maximum cruise 470 km./h. (292 m.p.h.), economical cruise 280 km./h. (174 m.p.h.), range 830 km. (516 ml.), ceiling 11,000 m. (36,089 ft.).

Yak-9D. Similar to standard Yak-9 but armed with one 20 mm. MPSH cannon (provided with 120 rounds) and one 12.7 mm. UBS machine-gun (120 rounds). Fuel capacity 650 l. (143 I.G.) sufficient for 1.5 hr. of full power flight. Take-off weight 3,115 kg. (6,867 lb.), range 1,300 km. (808 ml.), maximum

speed 600 km./h (373 m.p.h.) at 3,500 m. (11,483 ft.) and 540 km./h. (336 m.p.h.) at sea level.

Yak-9DD. As Yak-9D but with further enlarged fuel capacity up to 880 l. (194 I.G.). Take-off weight 3,300 kg. (7,275 lb.) and range 2,200 km. (1,367 ml.).

Yak-9B. Similar to Yak-9M but with internal bomb-bay for up to 450 kg. (992 lb.) bomb-load. Take-off weight 3,460 kg. (7,629 lb.).

Yak-9T. Armament, one 37 mm. Type 11-P-37 cannon (30 rounds ammunition) and one 12·7 mm. UBS machine-gun (220 rounds), or one 20 mm. MPSh or 23 mm. MP-23-VV cannon plus one 12·7 mm. UBS machine-gun. Sometimes a 12·7 mm. UBS was installed in the propeller-shaft instead of a cannon. Length increased by cannon to 8·65 m. (28 ft. 4½ in.) and cockpit moved 40 cm. (15½ in.) aft. Fuel capacity reduced to 360 l. (79 I.G.). Range 440 km. (273 ml.) at 470 km./h. (292 m.p.h.) at 1,000 m. (3,280 ft.) altitude and 820 km. (510 ml.) at 297 km./h. (185 m.p.h.).

Yak-9K. As Yak-9T but with 45 mm. or 50 mm. cannon with 15 rounds firing through propeller-shaft.

Yak-9L. Similar to Yak-9 but powered by an M-105PD engine rated at 1,100 h.p. for take-off. Nominal power 1,200 h.p. at 2,300 m. (7,546 ft.) and 1,050 h.p. at 6,400 m. (21,000 ft.). Armament reduced to one 12·7 mm. UBS in propeller-shaft and one 7·62 mm. ShKas machine-gun in the upper fuselage decking, and fuel reduced to 365 l. (80 I.G.). Time to 5,000 m. (16,400 ft.) 4·6 min.

Yak-9U. Powered by a VK-107A engine rated at 1,620 h.p. for take-off. Nominal rating 1,600 h.p. at 1,700 m. (5,577 ft.) and 1,500 h.p. at 4,500 m. (14,764 ft.). Armament one 20 mm. ShVak cannon (100 rounds), two 12·7 mm. UBS machine-guns (250 r.p.g.) and 200 kg. (441 lb.) of bombs or rockets. Fuel capacity 590 l. (130 I.G.). Span 10 m. (32 ft. 9¾ in.), length 8·7 m. (28 ft. 6½ in.), height 2·43 m. (7 ft. 11¾ in.), empty weight 2,315 kg. (5,104 lb.), take-off weight 3,150 kg. (6,944 lb.), maximum speed 600 km./h. (373 m.p.h.) at sea level and 700 km./h. (435 m.p.h.) at 5,500 m. (18,045 ft.), cruise 480 km./h. (298 m.p.h.), ceiling 10,500 m. (34,450 ft.), range 880 km. (547 ml.).

Yak-9P. Similar to Yak-9U but take-off weight 3,170 kg. (6,988 lb.), maximum speed 668 km./h. (415 m.p.h.) at 5,000 m. (16,400 ft.), ceiling 12,000 m. (39,370 ft.), time to 5,000 m. 3·6 min.

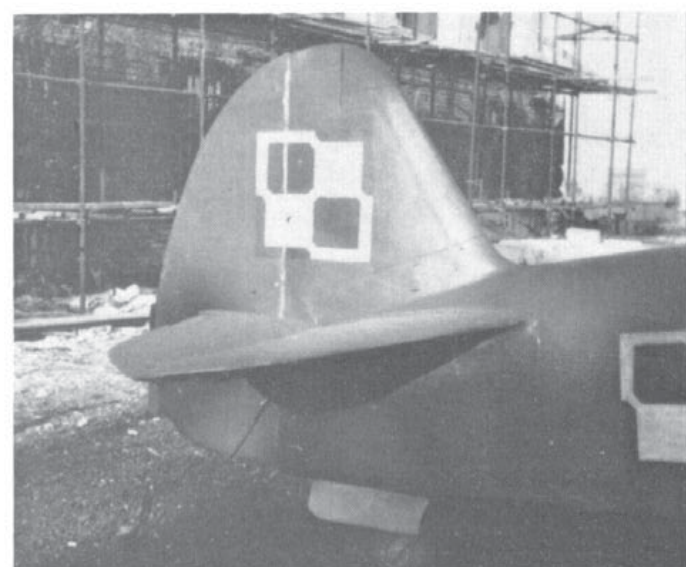
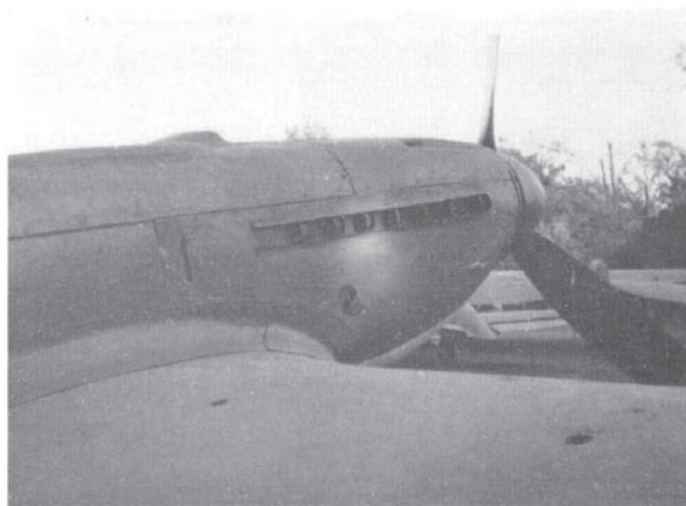
Yak-9 Trainer. Armament either completely removed or one 12·7 mm. UBS machine-gun. Second cockpit added and fuel capacity reduced. Local Polish modification (see below).

All versions could carry bombs or rockets in underwing racks.

THE YAK-9 IN SERVICE

From the outset Yakovlev fighters were designed for mass production, and thanks to the ability of State Aircraft Factory No. 153, where the Yakovlev organisation was based after the evacuation to the East in 1942, they were built in larger numbers than any other aircraft in the U.S.S.R.—and probably in the world, with the exception of the Bf 109.

Supplies of materials to the various departments were constantly maintained to facilitate smooth-running production. The aircraft were assembled in stages to rigorously maintained time schedules, and



Close-ups of the Yak-9P in the Polish Armed Forces Museum, Warsaw: (top) engine cowling, showing breech and muzzle fairings of one of the machine-guns; (centre) tailplane and tailwheel; (bottom) oil cooler intake and port mainwheel leg. (Photos: the author)

if any workers failed to complete their task in the time allowed, the aircraft were removed from the assembly-line to a storage-bay commonly known as "the mud". There they stood with cards affixed bearing the names of those who had so disgraced themselves.

Completed Yak-9's rolled off the assembly-line to be immediately test-flown and undergo armament trials, each test flight taking 30 minutes. Heading the team of test-pilots was Pavel Y. Fyedrovi (now a



A line-up of Yak-9DD's on a Yugoslav airfield.

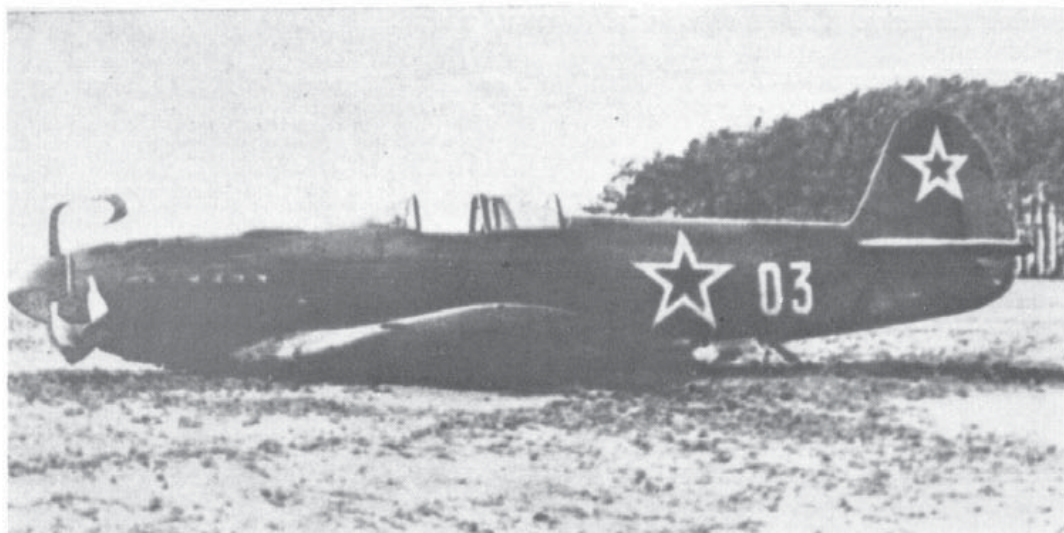
(Photo: Imp. War Museum)

General of the V.-V.S.) On receiving their C. of A.'s, the Yak-9's were usually taken by rail to dispersed storage airfields. The first batch of Yak-9's were loaded on a special train immediately after having been tested and delivered from behind the Urals to the Stalingrad area in the short space of five days.

The new fighters had three times as much fire-power as earlier types and this, coupled with an advantage in speed, climb-rate and manoeuvrability, made them a most unwelcome surprise to the *Luftwaffe* pilots at a vital moment in the campaign on the Eastern Front. First Yak-9 deliveries were made to Guards units and then, as output increased, to all close-support units of the V.-V.S.—R.K.K.A. In 1943 Allied units, such as Polish Fighter Regiments and the French "Normandie" Regiment were given Yak-9's in exchange for their earlier Yak-1's. The 1st Polish Fighter Regiment "Warszawa" used all variants of the Yak-9 and went into battle on 23rd August 1944 over the River Vistula. Later, Polish units were formed in attachment to V.-V.S. fighter regiments (The 9th Polish Fighter Regiment based on the 248th Fighter Regiment, V.-V.S.; the 10th Ftr. Regt. based on the 246th Ftr. Regt., V.-V.S.; the 11th Ftr. Regt. based on the 832nd Ftr. Regt., V.-V.S.—all belonging to the 3rd Polish Fighter Division of the 1st Polish Mixed Air Corps. All these units were equipped with the Yak-9.) These regiments were all "second generation" units, the 3rd Fighter Division being formed on 20th September 1944 in Karlovka, based on the 10th Training Brigade of the 2nd Air Army. The 9th

Regiment (C.O. Lt. Col. Bodrov) was formed in Krasnograd, and the 10th (C.O. Major Koshevnikov) and 11th (C.O. Lt. Col. Sokolov) Regiments were formed in Karlovka. Headquarters were in Kharkov, the C.O. of the Division being Col. Khlusovich. On the strength of the 3rd Fighter Division were a total of 80 Yak-9M's and 25 Yak-1's. All told there were 144 Yak's in service with operational Polish units on the Eastern Front, 119 being Yak-9's. Polish fighter units began their operational careers from airfields in the vicinity of Warsaw, took part in the liberation of Western Poland, fought over the Oder-Niesse line and, later, over Berlin. The war's end found them reaching to the west of Berlin.

The second Allied Yak-9 element on the Eastern Front was the *Normandie-Niemen* Fighter Regiment, comprised of French pilots and Russian groundcrew and commanded entirely by Free French Air Force officers. This unit began their service on Yak-1's and, in 1943, given a choice of all Allied fighter types including Lend-Lease aircraft, chose the Yak-9. Later the unit was re-equipped with Yak-3's. They fought over Northern Russia, Lithuania, Latvia, the Baltic Coast and Poland. When the war ended they were operating from Ilava in East Prussia. (Later *Normandie-Niemen* took its Yak-3's home to France.) The total score of this small but formidable unit was



Yak-9U shot down near Warsaw early in 1945.

273 confirmed "kills" plus many aircraft damaged and probably destroyed.

In the V.-V.S. itself, Yak's were flown by many prominent pilots and performed an infinite variety of tasks. According to a letter received by Yakovlev from Guards Regiment pilots in 1943, these officers achieved the following results with Yak's: Capt. Gorbunov—19 "kills" in a year, including 15 Bf 109's; 1st Lt. Kankoshev, two years operational—12 "kills"; 1st Lt. Pavlov, two years operational—15 "kills", including 10 Bf 109's; and 1st Lt. Kalugin, two years operational—15 "kills". Pilots from the unit commanded by Col. Tatanashvili included Capt. Kuznetsov—14 "kills", and Maj. Rudenko—10 "kills"; total score of his unit during two-and-a-half months of flying Yak-9's was 106 "kills". Yak's were flown by famous aces of the V.-V.S. such as Maj. Luganski, double Hero of the Soviet Union—34 "kills"; Capt. Gorokhov, Hero of the Soviet Union—15 "kills"; Maj. Myerkulov, Hero of the Soviet Union—32 "kills"; A. Vorosheykin, double Hero of the Soviet Union—52 "kills"; and Hero of the Soviet Union Komardinkin of the 274th Fighter Regiment—19 "kills" in 16 sorties over the Crimea. Two famous brothers are also of some interest: Hero of the Soviet Union Boris Glinka—10 "kills" in 1943 alone, and double Hero of the Soviet Union Dmitri Glinka—50 "kills"; double Hero of the Soviet Union Grigori Rechkalov had 56 outright "kills" plus a share in others in 122 sorties; and the most famous Yak pilot of all, Alexandr Pokryshin, three times Hero of the Soviet Union, scored 59 "kills".

Among the many units that had Yak's was one composed exclusively of women. This unit, the 586th Fighter Regiment of the V.-V.S., began operations in the autumn of 1942 over Saratov, later being transferred to the Stalingrad area. In December 1944 it was based at Kiev and when hostilities ended it was at Debrecen in Hungary. The C.O. of the 586th Ftr. Regt. was T. Kazarinova and Commissar of Political and Educational affairs was O. Kulikova. The regiment's first two "kills" were obtained by Valerya Khomyakova (later Hero of the Soviet Union) and Olga Yamshchikova.

Yak-9's were also used in the Far East against the Japanese Kwantung Army, but because there was little aerial opposition they were mainly confined to ground-strafting and bomber-escort duties. Yak-9DD's took part in one of the very few overseas actions undertaken by the V.-V.S. During the winter

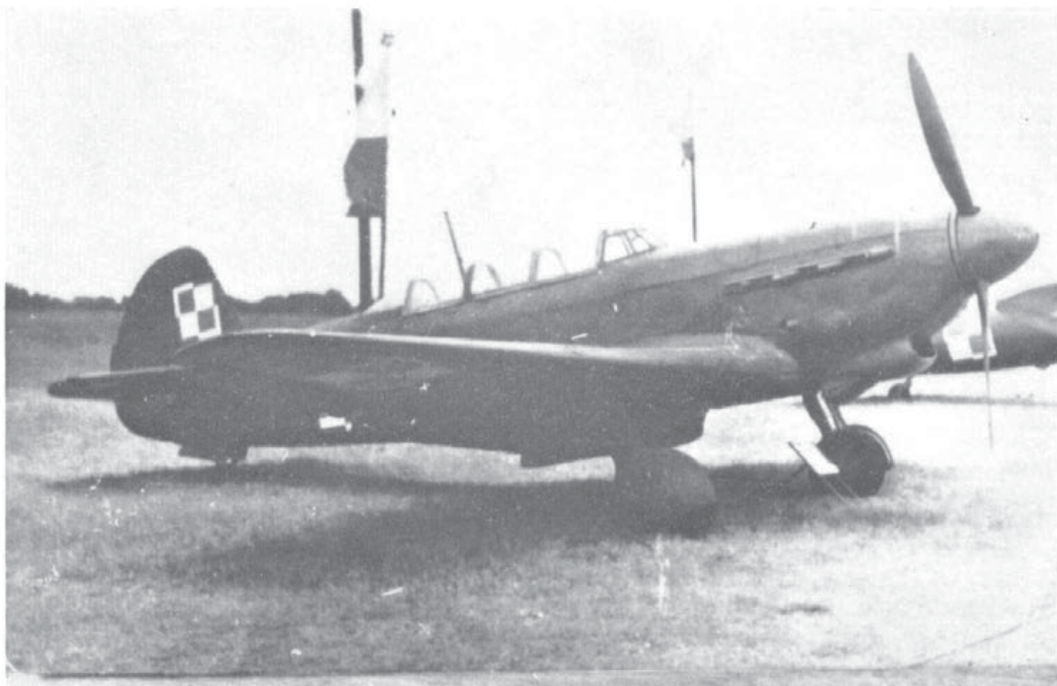


Yak-9U's in Russian (above) and Polish (below) insignia. The Polish machine was damaged in a forced landing, as evidenced by the bent propeller blades. (Photo: V. Nemecek)

of 1944/45 the 236th Fighter Division, part of the Air Group commanded by Hero of the Soviet Union Maj-Gen. A. Vitruk, was detached to Bari, Italy, to operate in support of the Yugoslav partisans. This unit was later based in the Soten-Orlik area of Yugoslavia and flew about 180 sorties daily; it also trained 288 Yugoslav pilots. This was not the first time that Yak-9's operated in the Mediterranean Theatre. They had previously acted as escorts for U.S.A.A.F. B-17G's in "shuttle" raids on Roumania, flying from Poltava to Bari.



Wolf in wolf's clothing!
A Yak-9M playing the rôle of a Hurricane for the film cameras, Warsaw, 1955.



Yak-9 trainer—a Polish modification known as the “9 Sparka” (Double Nine).

Many Yak-9's were so-called “presentation aircraft”, an example being the machine subscribed for in the name of collective-farm worker F. Golovaty (who had previously funded a Yak-1) and named “For the Final Defeat of the Enemy”. This Yak-9, flown by Maj. Yerechin, fought over the Caucasus, the Ukraine and Hungary, and by the end of the war it was operating over Czechoslovakia. In 1943, Muscovite workers founded a squadron of Yak-1's named “*Moskva*” (Moscow), and later that year this unit was re-equipped with Yak-9M's, each bearing the inscription “*Moskva*” on the fuselage-side below the cockpit.

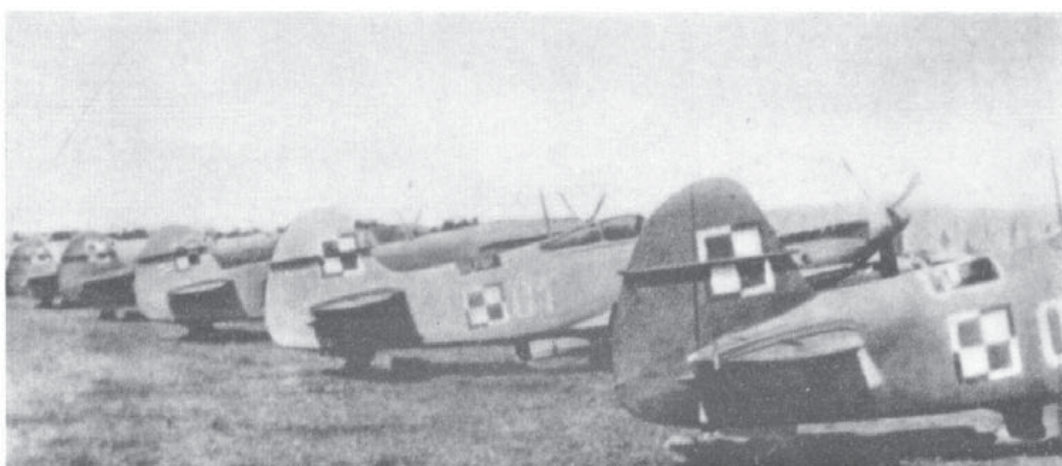
The post-war career of the Yak-9U and -9P variants was not so colourful, and it ended in Russia in 1953 with the introduction of the La-11 and the Yak-15 jet. Some Yak-9P's were exported to Poland in the period 1945-48 and in 1949 fifty-three were relegated to training duties, being supplanted in first-line service by Yak-15's. It was in Poland that the Yak-9 underwent its final modification: some Yak-9 aircraft had their armament removed, thus becoming the sole trainer variant of the Yak-9. They were commonly known as “9 Sparkas” (“Double Nines”) and were not given an official designation. Yak-9's also saw some post-war service in the Yugoslav Air Force and provided the inspiration for the indigenous S49 fighter.

On 25th June 1950, six Yak-9P's of the Korean People's Armed Forces Air Force (North Korea) crossed the 38th Parallel, strafed Kimpo airfield near Seoul, and destroyed a U.S.A.F. C-54 Sky-master—the first U.S. aircraft to be lost in Korea. Two days later, F-82 Twin Mustangs destroyed three Yak-9's and within a few weeks the North Korean air force had withdrawn to Manchuria leaving the U.S.A.F. in complete control of the skies over the whole of Korea until the appearance of the MiG-15 in November 1950. United Nations forces captured a Yak-9P in Korea and it was later evaluated in the U.S.A. (where it now remains on exhibition at the U.S.A.F. Museum, Wright-Patterson A.F.B.). Its performance was roughly comparable to that of the P-51 Mustang but the workmanship was far inferior to contemporary U.S. standards. The Chinese Communists were also supplied with the Yak-9 although there is little information on their service use.

Despite its inauspicious exit from service, there is no doubt that the Yak-9 was one of the most popular and successful fighters of all time. It was always called “*Ostronosyi*” (Sharp-nose) by its pilots to distinguish it from its radial-engined contemporary, the La-5, although official sources often named it “*Yastrebok*” (“Little Hawk”). Alexander S. Yakovlev is now a General of the V.-V.S., twice Hero of Socialist Labour, and, at 61 years of age, still active in the design field.

© Witold Liss, 1967.

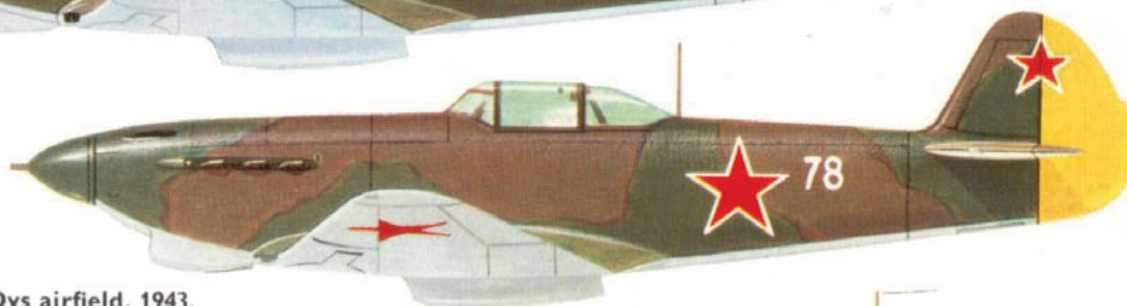
The author and publishers gratefully acknowledge access to the Yakovlev memoirs entitled “Zapiski Aviakonstruktora” and the assistance given by Philip J.R. Moyes in the preparation of this Profile.



Yak-9T's of a Polish unit lined-up with the rudders fixed to prevent the aircraft from being flown.



Yak 9M of "Moscow"
Escadra; 1943.



Yak 9T at Dys airfield, 1943.



Yak 9M of Normandie-Niemen Regt.
(French volunteer personnel);
North Russia and Baltic coast, 1943.



Yak 9T of 1st Polish Fighter
Regt. "Warszawa";
Vistula Front, August 1944.



Poland.

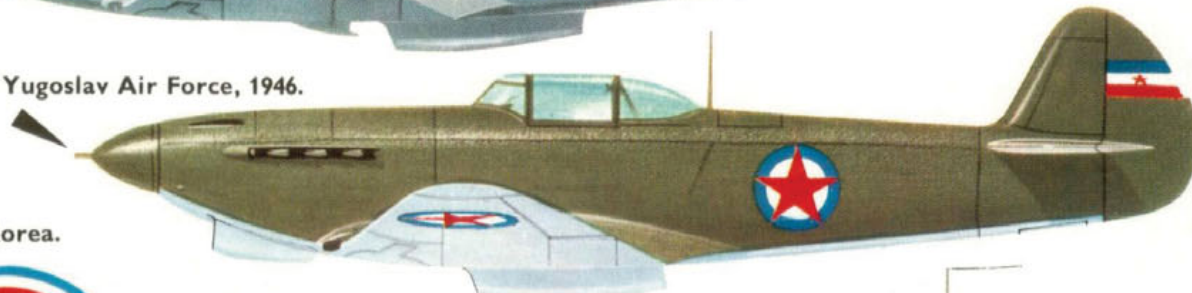


Yak 9P of Polish Air Force, 1946.



Yugoslavia.

Yak 9M of Yugoslav Air Force, 1946.

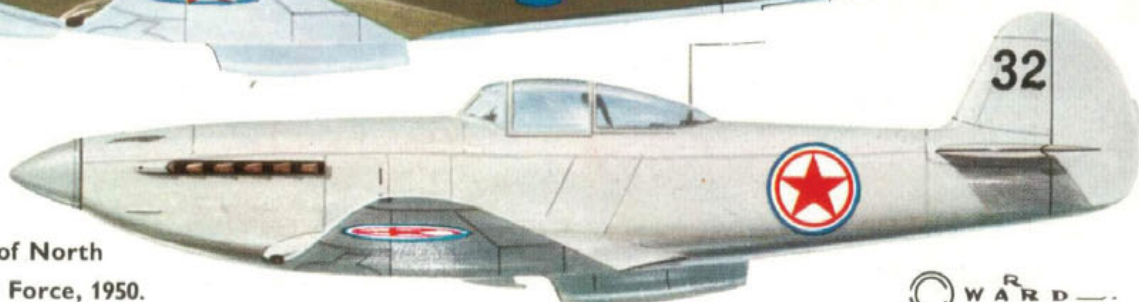


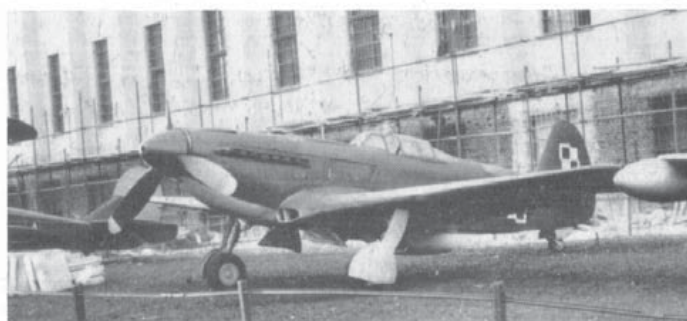
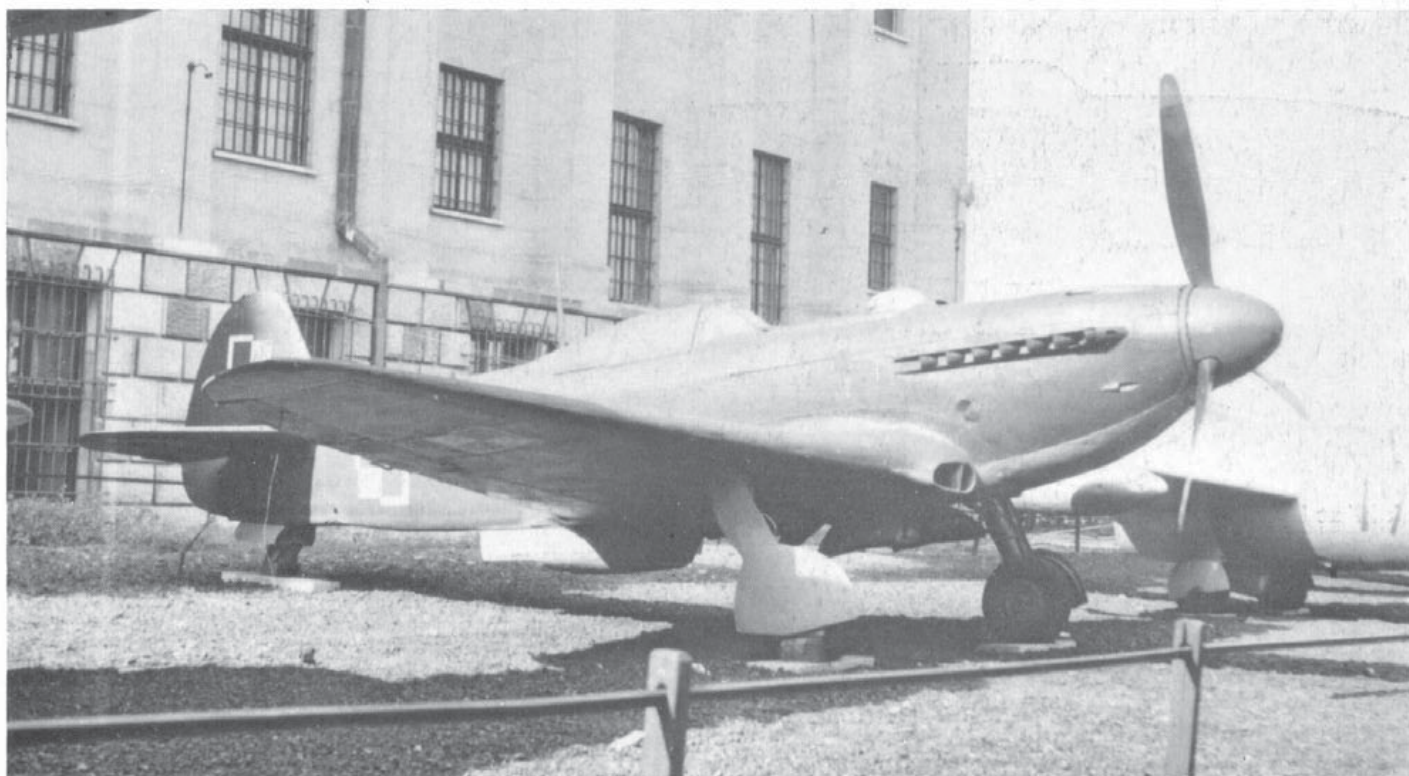
Yugoslavia,
fin flash.

North Korea.



Yak 9U of North
Korean Air Force, 1950.





Round-the-clock views of the Yak-9P preserved in Warsaw, note the transparent D/F loop cover aft of the cockpit and also the Polikarpov Po-2 and Yak-23 aircraft adjacent.
(Photos. V. Nemecek, J. Lubkowski and the author)

