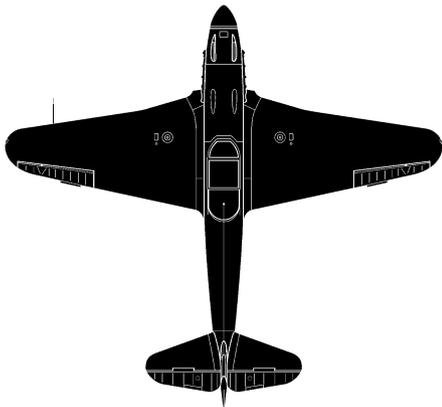


Yak-3



The Soviet Yak-3 was an exceptional fighter that earned great respect in the final years of World War II. Revered by its pilots and feared by enemies, the Yakovlev aircraft was the scourge of the Luftwaffe on the Eastern Front, generally sweeping the sky in dogfights below 16,000 feet altitude. It was light, maneuverable, tough, easy to maintain—perfectly suited to low-altitude combat from forward bases.

Design work began in 1940, but Germany's invasion of Russia in June 1941 caused an interruption, delaying the Yak-3's appearance until 1944. The aircraft was of mixed construction that included plywood covered wing surfaces with an all-metal stressed skin fuselage.

The Yak-3 was the smallest and lightest fighter on the Eastern Front. Its speed and maneuver-

ability more than compensated for its light armor and armament. It boasted a clean, high-visibility canopy. Some who flew it preferred the Yak-3 to either the US P-51 Mustang or British Spitfire.

The Yak-3 had a short but distinguished combat record. Used mostly as a tactical fighter, it would fly low over battlefields and force dogfights, almost inevitably besting German aircraft. Soon, the Luftwaffe pulled back in the face of the threat. German fighters usually would try to attack from above, realizing that surprise was their best chance to survive. In skilled Soviet hands, the Yak-3 was a deadly weapon, and German pilots rightly feared it.

—Walter J. Boyne

This aircraft: USSR Air Force Yak-3—No. 34—as it looked in May 1945 when deployed with 2nd Air Squadron in occupied Germany.



In Brief

Designed, built by Yakovlev ★ first flight April 12, 1941 (prototype)
★ crew of one ★ number built 4,848 ★ **Specific to Yak-3 (main variant):** one Klimov M-105 piston engine ★ max speed 407 mph
★ cruise speed 290 mph ★ max range 560 mi ★ armament one 20 mm cannon, two 12.7 mm machine guns ★ weight (max) 5,864 lb
★ span 30 ft 2 in ★ length 27 ft 10 in ★ height 7 ft 11 in.

Famous Fliers

Combat (Soviet): B. N. Eryomin, S. D. Lugansky, S. V. Nosov, G. N. Zakharov. **Combat (French):** Marcel Albert, Jacques André, Roland de la Poype, Louis Delfino, Marcel Lefèvre. **Test pilots:** S. N. Anokhin, V. L. Rastorguev, P. M. Stefanovski, A. B. Yumashev.

Interesting Facts

Nicknamed “Ubiytza”—“Killer,”—and “Ostronosyi”—“Sharp Nose” ★ caused German pilots to avoid combat below 16,000 feet ★ climbed at 498 mph when fitted with rocket engine (Yak-3RD) ★ flown by postwar air forces of Poland, Yugoslavia ★ built in 12 variants ★ recreated (replicas) by Yakovlev since 1991 ★ had smaller wing area than even superlight Japanese A6M Zero ★ lost rear plywood surfaces in high-speed dives.



Yak-3 was one of the most maneuverable fighters of World War II.