

By Cdr. Peter B. Mersky, USNR (Ret.)

Gordon, Yefim and Vladimir Rigmant. *Tupolev Tu-95/-142 "Bear," Russia's Intercontinental-Range Heavy Bomber*. 1997. 128 pp. Ill. \$24.95.

Gordon, Yefim. *MiG-25 "Foxbat" and MiG-31 "Foxhound," Russia's Defensive Front Line*. 1998. 96 pp. Ill. \$21.95.

Both books were published by Specialty Press, 11481 Kost Dam Road, North Branch, MN 55056.

As vast files of previously classified information from the former Soviet Union open up, industrious authors and enthusiasts are writing about aircraft in detail heretofore unknown. These two volumes in the well-done Aerofax series are good examples.

The long-lived *Bear* series and the Mach 3 *Foxbat/Foxhound* twins are chronologically at opposite ends of the time line, and their missions differ greatly. Yet, each type has retained interest in the West. These books include photos and details that would never have been seen in the past outside the pages of restricted Department of Defense publications.

The *Bear* volume provides thumbnail descriptions, photos and drawings of the aircraft's many variants, as well as inside views and close-ups of external areas. The *Foxbat/Foxhound* volume includes a folio of general arrangement drawings and well-drawn color profiles.

Both books are highly recommended for the intel officer, historian and modeler.

Jarrett, Philip et al. *Biplane to Monoplane, Aircraft Development 1919-1939*. Putnam Aeronautical Books, 33 John St., London WC1N 2AT, UK. Brassey's Inc., PO Box 960, Herndon, VA 22070. 1997. 164 pp. Ill. \$35.

This book consists of a series of essays by various authorities on topics such as "Structural Revolution," "Stowaway Wheels" and "The Aeroplane at Sea." It ends with a chapter on the Spanish Civil War, which served as a proving ground for many of the aircraft and tactics that would carry through the first half of the coming Second World War.

Published in a large format, the book takes advantage of some fine photography showing many of the more interesting British aircraft types in the interwar years.

You'll want to spend time with this scholarly work; you can't read the individual essays only once.

Reade, David. *The Age of Orion: the Lockheed P-3 Story*. Schiffer Publishing Ltd., 4880 Lower Valley Rd., Atglen, PA 19310-9717. 1998. 223 pp. \$49.95.

David Reade's work is an impressive compilation and research opus, but his copious collection of static photos is unattractive and rife with Schiffer-esque typos and omissions. Also, there are very few good views of people. I showed the book to two commander P-3 tactical coordinators—who eagerly anticipated an enjoyable session inspecting photos and history—and they each shared the same lackluster opinion.

The book basically is a catalog—listing dates, systems and programs. I would have liked to see a few personal experiences, which would have given depth and personality to the text. Nevertheless, *Age of Orion* is an adequate resume of the P-3's long, vital career in peace and war.

Lake, Jon. *Grumman F-14 Tomcat, Shipborne Superfighter*. Aerospace Publishing/Airtime Publishing, 10 Bay St., Westport, CT 06880. 1998. 224 pp. Ill. \$34.95.

This volume is certainly one of the best presentations on the F-14, and comes from a knowledgeable editor and dedicated production staff who know their stuff. With an introduction by now-Lieutenant Commander Steve Broce, who gained the only F-14 kill and one of only three Navy kills during Operation Desert Storm, the book is an admirable collection of photos, facts and experiences.

Lake provides excellent coverage of the markings the *Tomcat* wore—from red stripes or fin flashes to the drab color schemes of the 1980s to the occasional flamboyant 1990s squadron insignia. The photos and beautiful artwork comprise a modeler's dream, and the narrative details the F-14's development service, including recent activities as the "Bomcat" over Bosnia. The duties of the pilot and radar intercept officer are discussed at length, providing a greater understanding of the unique team that flies and operates the Navy's long-serving fighter. There is also a section on the aircraft's air-to-air record, including its use during the Iran-Iraq War.

This is an excellent work on one of the most important naval fighters of the past 25 years.

Toperczer, Istvan. *Air War Over North Viet Nam: The Vietnamese People's Air Force 1949-1977.*

Squadron/Signal Publications, 1115 Crowley Dr., Carrollton, TX 75011. 1998. 64 pp. Ill. \$10.95.

Finally, a book focusing on the North Vietnamese side of the war. This treatise is a fascinating collection of photos and facts, including that there were 16 North Vietnamese aces. Drawing on sources ranging from interviews with the MiG pilots to the VPAF museum, Dr. Toperczer examines the development of the force and its role in the war with the United States.

The book is not without errors, however. The VPAF claimed 13 U.S. Navy F-8s in various engagements, but official Navy records admit to only 3 *Crusaders* lost in aerial combat, all in 1966. I also have trouble believing the assertion on page 45 that Navy F-4 pilots gunned a MiG pilot after he ejected and was hanging in his chute, since Navy *Phantoms* did not have an internal cannon and rarely flew with a gun pod.

As the first book to cover the subject in any depth, *Air War Over North Viet Nam* is an important publication.

McGuinness, Brian, Capt., USNR (RET). *Coffee on the Wing Beam.* Knights of the Red Branch Press, PO Box 296, Clearlake, WA 98235-0296. 1998. 213 pp. Ill. \$11.95.

Considering its lengthy service in U.S. and foreign colors, Lockheed's *Neptune* patrol bomber has not been very well served by historical writers. A few books, including a recent one from Schiffer, has detailed the P-2's career, but nothing has come from someone who flew the graceful, but noisy and somewhat spartan, aircraft.

Capt. McGuinness has rectified this omission with this self-published paperback. Although it requires a hefty price, and the book's construction is weak—pages come out with little effort—his memoir will bring a smile, maybe a tear, to former crew members. The book also provides a first look inside the little-publicized Market Time operations in Vietnam, for which the P-2 and the later P-3 are best known in that conflict.

There are a few interesting photos from the author's album, and he is obviously writing his account with a lot of feeling and personal involvement. In fact, while he does a credible job of tracing the *Neptune's* historical development, he's best when he's describing the long flights that were the P-2's bread and butter. He also quickly describes the combat records of Observation Squadron 67 and Heavy Attack Squadron 21, who used highly modified P-2s on offensive work monitoring the heavily trafficked supply trails from North Vietnam and interdicting the Communist network's flow.

The book is a little offbeat, but a welcome addition

to the hopefully growing literature about the patrol Navy.

Wooldridge, E. T., ed. *The Golden Age Remembered: U.S. Naval Aviation, 1919-1941.* Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, MD 21402. 1998. 376 pp. Ill. \$34.95.

A former Naval Aviator and an experienced historian, the editor continues to make admirable use of USNI's large oral history collection. This is the third volume in the series, and is probably the best so far. The between-wars period has not received the attention it deserves, so *The Golden Age* is that much more welcome. It presents in the pilots' own words the experiences—sometimes humorous, sometimes dangerous, always enlightening—of flying early wood-and-canvas aircraft from the Navy's first carriers, or participating in major developments of Naval Aviation.

Names of giants abound in the pages—Whiting, Chevalier, Pride and others. Accounts of flying from *Langley* (CV 1) in Vought VE-7s, or from the airship *Macon* in tiny Curtiss F9C *Sparrowhawks*, show how tenuous the experience could be. There are 46 photos, some of which are quite good, although I wish they had been printed on coated stock to better show the black-and-white images.

The book certainly gives a good view of how far Naval Aviation has evolved in the last 60 years, but also what we left behind to get where we are today.

Wilcox, Robert K. *Wings of Fury.* Pocket Books, 1230 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10020. 1997. 326 pp. Ill. \$24.00.

This book is somewhat of a sequel to the author's *Scream of Eagles* (John Wiley & Sons, 1990), which detailed the creation of Topgun. Both books are highly readable, entertaining descriptions of military aviation. I was, however, a little disappointed in the new book's narrative, which falls into the drawn-out, gee-whiz type of reporting.

After *Wings of Fury* gets going, the writing and action are very good. This is especially true in the final portion that includes the 1991 Gulf War and its abbreviated, intense period of air-to-air combat experienced by Navy and Air Force fighter crews.

The author writes about many of today's cockpit legends, especially those in the Navy. He includes unknown details of various engagements that are quite interesting, such as the 1981 Gulf of Sidra shootdowns.

Though well-written, the narrative could have used better editing to keep it moving. But when he is describing the action and events leading up to it, Wilcox is entertaining and, in some cases, adds new material to the historical record.