

Pathfinder

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How to test a jet—the hard way

Yanks outfight Russia's best in first air duels



Duel. The MIG (right) had edge in speed, but the Shooting Star won.

Are Joe Stalin's jet fighter planes better than ours? The answer to that is being given in aerial battles between American and Russian-made jets in sub-zero cold high over the Korean-Manchurian border.

Lt. Russell Brown of Pasadena, Calif., flying an American F-80 Shooting Star, hooked up with a Russian MIG-15 in history's first jet dogfight. (MIG is a contraction of the last names of the designers, Artem I. Mikoyan and Mikhail I. Gurevich.)

Red Acrobats. Brown and three other American jetsters had just completed a strafing run. At 20,000 feet, they spotted a flight of enemy jets across the Manchurian border. This is the story as Brown told it:

"They were doing acrobatics—just yo-yoing around. Suddenly they came over at about 400 miles an hour. They were good-looking planes, all shiny and brand spanking new. I don't think they wanted a fight, I think they meant to tease us to come over Chinese territory.

"I climbed after one and he climbed away from me to the left. I cut inside him and let go with my guns, but he kept pulling ahead. I was doing 300 miles an hour. He was making 400.

"Then he did a wing-over and dived for Manchuria. That was his big mistake. I followed him all the way down at 600 miles an hour right on his tail. He finally caught fire . . . and exploded. I had to pull up when I saw the Yalu River in my gun sights. . . . If I had been flying the MIG-15 I could have gotten away. He had a full 100-mile-an-hour edge on me in speed."

Fighting six miles over Korea, other American pilots matched the success of the flier from Pasadena. As the week began the Pentagon box score showed at least 20 MIGs shot down or damaged. American losses: none. This early in the game one conclusion was that American pilots were superior. They were getting in the knockout punches, although their



Brown. In his gun sights, a MIG-15 and the Yalu River.

ships were outmatched in speed by the MIG, Russia's best jet.

Sabre in Reserve. The Yanks were flying the Shooting Star and the Navy's Panther. Both of these jets have speeds of 600 mph plus. But our best jet, the new F-86 Sabre, has yet to see action over Korea. The Sabre, with swept-back wings like the MIG, is at least 50 mph faster than the Shooting Star.