

This Monster Will Roar No More for Germany



ONE OF THE WEHRMACHT'S HEAVIES was this huge siege mortar captured by the Russians; it is believed to be either a 240-mm. or 395-mm. piece. In Moscow it was examined by members of the Soviet Supreme Command; left to right are Adm. Kuznetsov, People's Commissar for the Navy; Marshal Voronov, in charge of Red Army artillery; Marshal Zhukov, Deputy Supreme Commander; and Marshal Voroshilov. Comparable British weapon is the 9.2-in. gun which fires a 390-lb. shell a distance of 20,000 yds.

This Soviet Plane Turned Nazi Jeers to Fears

One of the earliest aircraft ever produced by the Soviet, the plywood-and-fabric Yu.2 was almost a museum piece. Normally this two-seater would be obsolete by now; but the impossible has happened, and Russian airmen are today maddening the Nazis with it. Achievements of this astonishing old-timer are here narrated by the Soviet writer KONSTANTIN SIMONOV.

THE Germans called the Yu.2 "Russ-plywood." These aircraft are made of wood and linen. Their speed is only 60-70 miles an hour, and they make a noise like a motor-cycle on a bad road. What a queer notion to send people in such rickety affairs to drop bombs by hand out of the cockpit on to the German positions!

But Russians are obstinate people, and if they once get a good idea into their heads they will carry it out, sooner or later, on a grand Russian scale. Before long, bomber detachments of "Russ-plywood" were pounding the Germans with hundreds of tons of bombs. The Germans stopped making jokes about our Yu.2s.

At Stalingrad, as soon as it was dark and the first white glow-worms of signal rockets marked the forward positions, the sky began to growl softly over the German positions. German searchlights groped, German A.A. guns fired at random, and vari-coloured threads of machine-gun bursts converged from all sides on the queer sound. The gurgling and rumbling went on. The Yu.2s were abroad.

Here and there they would suspend flares like lamps over the ground itself, drop small bombs into gullies crowded with German troops, on roads along which columns were marching, into houses where the Germans had their Headquarters.

After a lot of hard work, the German A.A. gunners did finally get the measure of the "Russ-plywood." So our pilots adopted new methods. They climbed to the limit, took aim at their targets, glided over soundlessly and dropped their cargoes in dead silence. About this time fantastic hints concerning some strange new Russian aircraft with noiseless engines, or with none at all, appeared in German soldiers' letters from the front . . .

ON autumn nights the steppe is pervaded with the scent of wormwood, and a chilly ground-wind blows from the Dnieper. The cloudy, starless sky is black, remote, impenetrable. But away to the left a broad crimson glow stretches for many miles where Stalingrad burns. We are crossing a flying-field, and somewhere close at hand invisible aircraft hum in the air. Fifteen or twenty

kilometres away a searchlight swings its blade in our direction, and goes out.

"Our men are coming back. They're preparing to land. The searchlight's showing them the right direction," my companion explains. After half an hour's tramp we reach the command-post. From above this is only a huge haystack, just like thousands dotting the steppe. We stoop and squeeze through a little door curtained with two tent-cloaks. Within, we find quite a big room. Two tables are placed to form the letter "T." The commander and detachment commissar are seated close to a lantern on the table.

WE have arrived at a busy moment; crews come in to report and then go out to take off. The freshness of the night air and the fragrance of hay fill the room.

Tonight the crews are going to bomb a settlement around an airfield not far from Stalingrad. The Germans broke into it and stationed large units there, so for the past few days it has been subjected to a severe pounding. Many of the Yu.2 pilots used to live in that settlement. That was where they learned to fly. So today's tasks are particularly exact and reports very detailed.

"What were you pounding just now?" Captain Ovodov asks a tall airman just back from a sortie.

"Number Three."

"That was the house you used to live in, wasn't it?"

"No, I was in Number Four. There are fires here and here, and right in this spot."

"Just here?" the commander asks, growing thoughtful. "Yes. In short, my cottage is either occupied or burned down. Well, that's that."

Every night means seven or eight hours in the air, every night means fifteen sorties, every night these little "Russ-plywood" aircraft drop tons of bombs on the enemy. Sometimes they beat the heavy bombers at their own game.

"We rarely have a day off," Captain Ovodov says, "particularly in summer. Unless, of course, there's a terrific fog. Then we're free."

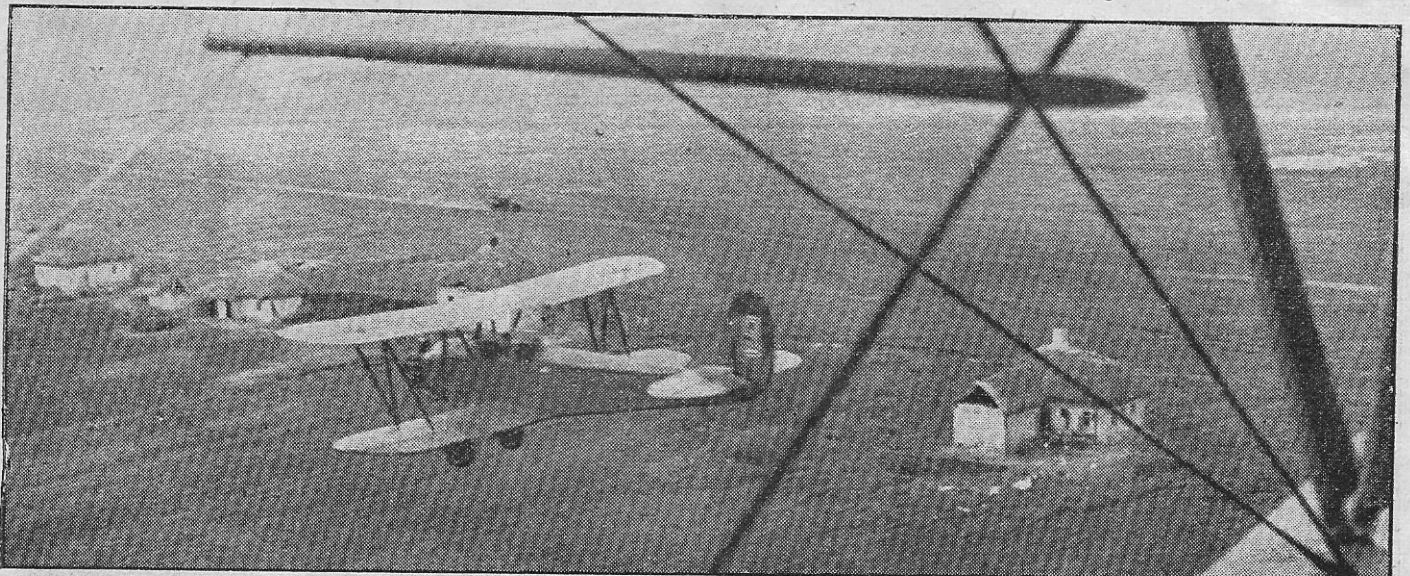
Just as the tommy-gun cannot really replace the rifle in an experienced sniper's hands, the old leisurely Yu.2 proved irreplaceable. Its deficiencies, such as its slow speed, became advantages. At Stalingrad, where the front line passed from house to house, from village to village, in zigzags, wedges and tongues, not one contemporary night-bomber could have tackled the jobs the Yu.2 could do. It could bomb the German half of a block while the other half-block was still in Soviet hands. Its low speed and ideal bombing-aim enabled it to hang over the target and strike unerringly. It bombed places where the German pilots would not risk operating for fear of dropping their loads on their own troops.

The Yu.2 pilots loved their planes for their serviceability, the simple way you could take off and land in them, and for the fact that though they looked so flimsy they were really one of the grimiest of weapons. They could stand six night flights in any weather, go wherever they were sent. The pilots knew that the infantry down below were fonder of these planes than of any other. They called them affectionately the "foresters," or the "cornflies," according to the landscape.

ALL the pilots were experienced night-flyers, who rarely suffered losses. During six months only two failed to return from their mission. They took off and landed in pitch darkness. Never once had the Germans been able to bomb their aerodrome: all the lighting allowed was a couple of lanterns. Yu.2 pilots boasted that they themselves could land by the light of a cigarette.

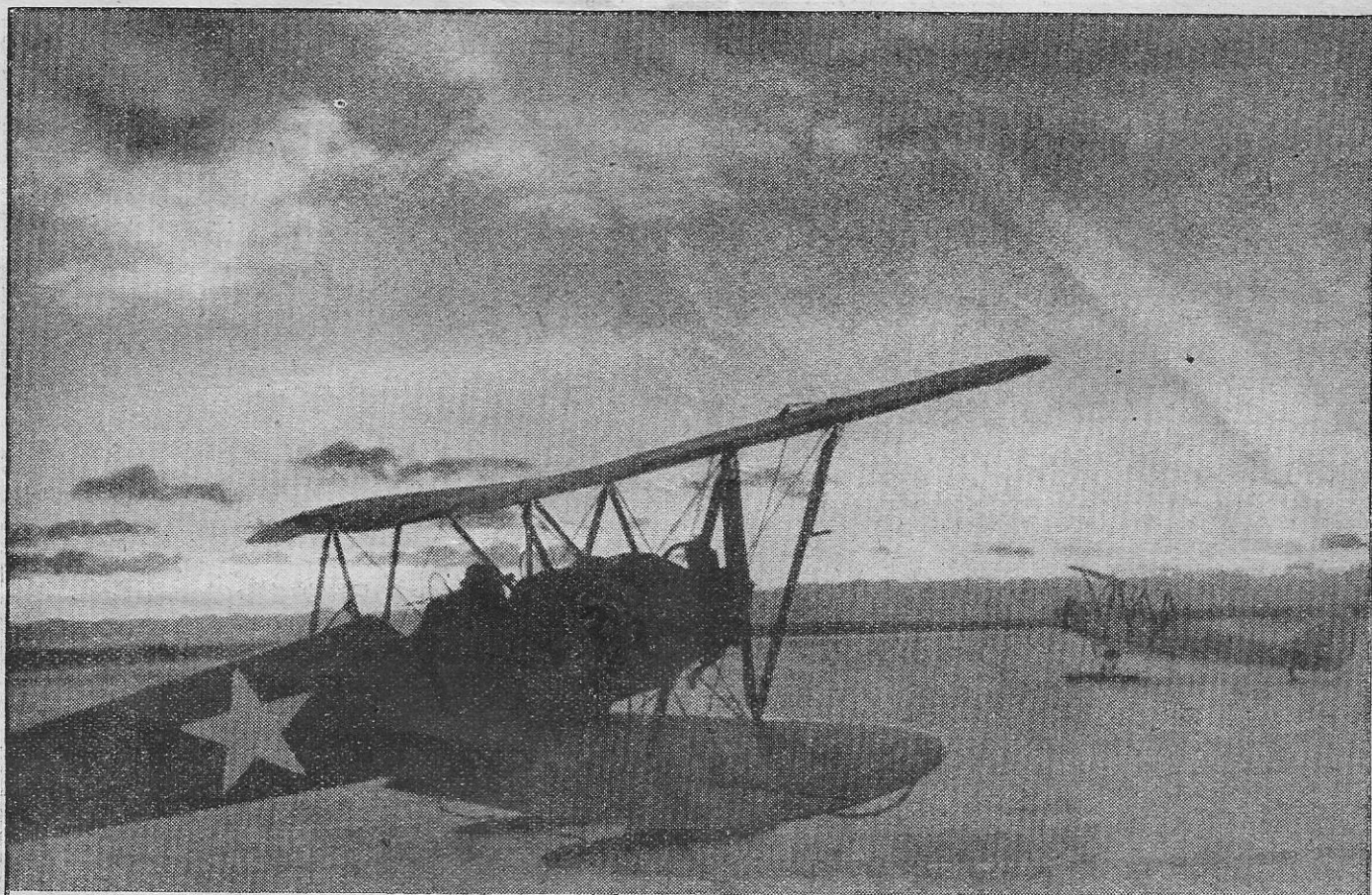
This is a great day for the detachment: pilots and navigators are to receive rewards for their work. The best receive the Order of Lenin. Now, just before daybreak, they are making their second sortie.

An hour later they return, rubbing their eyes, red from sleeplessness and wind, and shivering in the sharp morning air. Some day, when the history of this war is written, the names of these obscure heroes will be remembered; they are the hardworking, manly, modest young fellows who were responsible for altering the significance of the nickname "Russ-plywood" from the absurd to the grim.



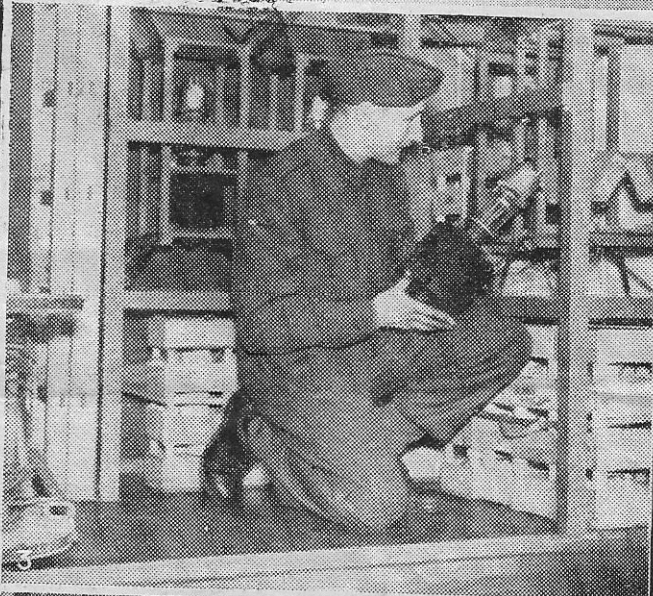
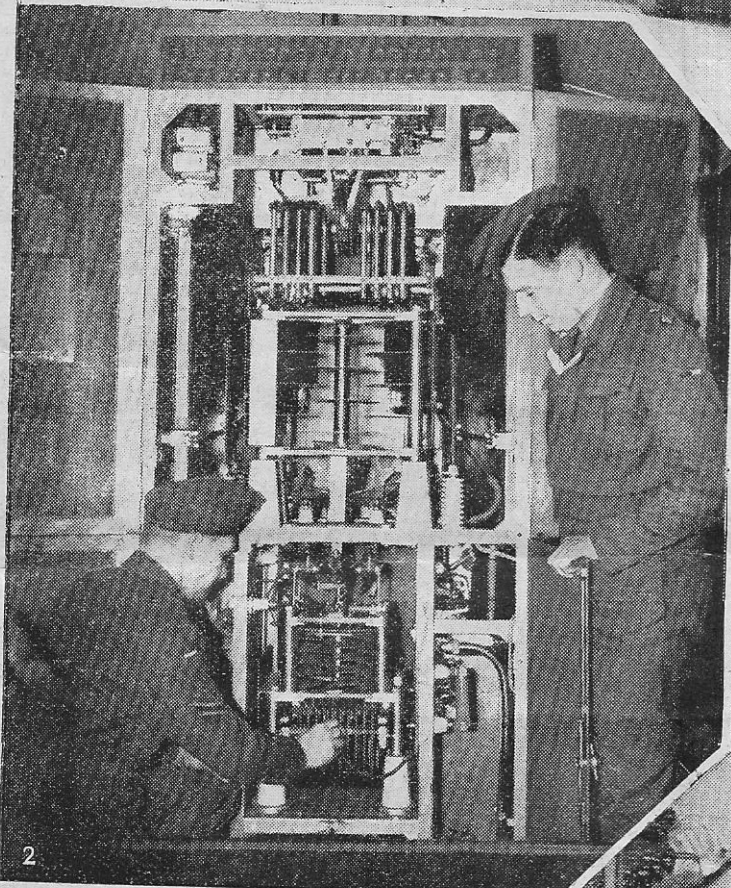
AERIAL RECONNAISSANCE is the immediate job of this low-flying Yu.2. Tomorrow it may be doing particularly useful work in connexion with communications and supplies for guerilla forces in the rear of the German lines; the next day it may be dropping bombs. Several Guards bomber regiments of the Russian Air Force are equipped with this old and slow-flying, but amazingly efficient, plane which has gained the wholesome respect of enemy A.A. gunners after having been regarded by them as a harmless joke. See also facing page.

Old-Timer of the Red Air Force Fights On



YU.2 BIPLANE BOMBERS of Russia's sky armoury stand motionless (top), but ready for action in the dusk on a snow-covered Soviet airfield, their undercarriages replaced by skis to enable them more easily to negotiate treacherously slippery ground. Below, they drop their flares on German front line positions to light the way; in spite of the fact that they first took the air 15 years ago they are still remarkable for accurate night precision bombing. See descriptive account in facing page.

'Golden Arrow' Will Flash Home Victory News



FROM BATTLEFIELD to Britain, when our western offensive begins, will come news of the Forces' progress flashed direct to London by mobile wireless transmitting and receiving units named "Golden Arrow," after the famous peacetime boat train.

A unit consists of seven vehicles, including two Diesel power-generators (one a spare) mounted as trailers towed by the lorries, and the section commander's small utility truck; each section has an officer and 22 operators, instrument mechanics, electricians, and drivers of the Royal Corps of Signals, and a cook of the Army Catering Corps with petrol-burning stove.

A complete Golden Arrow unit is seen on the road (1). A corporal adjusts the tuning coils (2); a signalman replaces a transmitter valve (3). Inside the wireless station vehicle (4); a dispatch rider, in the background, is delivering messages for transmission.

Photos, Associated Press, G.P.U.
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