

G U R P S[®]

WAWAII RED TIDE[™]



By Gene Seabolt

STEVE JACKSON GAMES

GURPS®

WWII™

RED TIDE

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STEVE JACKSON GAMES

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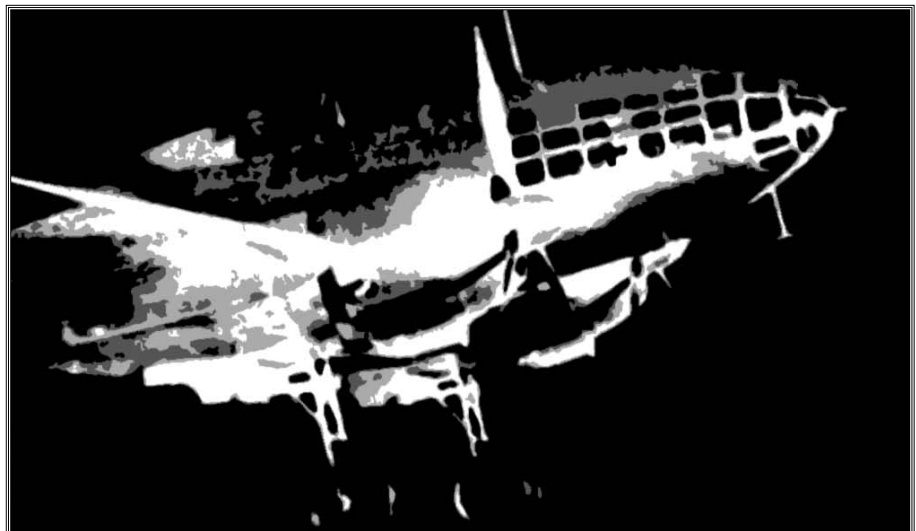
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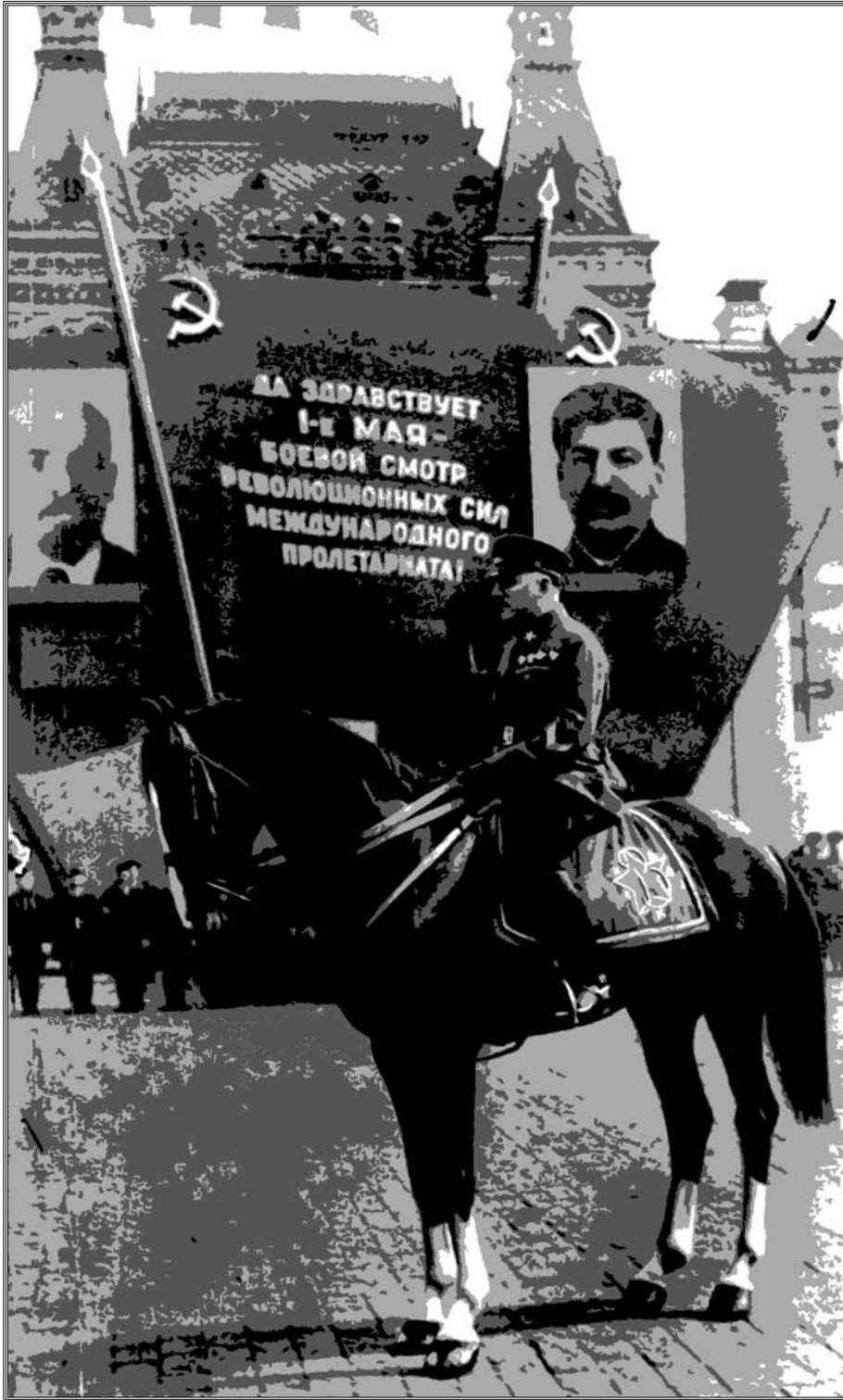
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ABOUT *GURPS*

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Errata. Everyone makes mistakes, including us – but we do our best to fix our errors. Up-to-date errata pages for all *GURPS* releases, including this book, are available on our website – see above.

Page References

Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the *GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition*. Any page reference that begins with a B refers to the *GURPS Basic Set* – e.g., p. B102 means p. 102 of the *GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition*. Page references that begin with CI indicate *GURPS Compendium I*. Other references are CII to *Compendium II*, HT to *High-Tech*, W to *WWII*, W:D to *WWII: Dogfaces*, W:FH to *WWII: Frozen Hell*, W:HS to *WWII: Hand of Steel*, W:IC to *WWII: Iron Cross*, W:MP to *WWII: Motor Pool*, and W:RH to *WWII: Return to Honor*. The abbreviation for *this* book is W:RT. For a full list, see p. CI181 or the updated web list at www.sjgames.com/gurps/abbrevs.html.

INTRODUCTION

Those who know a little history, and like to toy with the less informed, sometimes assert that the Russians won WWII pretty much on their own. This is, at best, a qualified truth. Others who also know a little history tire of that argument and counter that the Russians would have lost without U.S. and British aid. That, also, is a half-truth at best.

To begin with, half of those “Russians” weren’t Russians at all, but rather Ukrainians, Georgians, and scores of other nationalities. These aggregate Soviets had to deal with internal grudges far worse than any dispute between the western allies.

They made common cause, for the most part, to fight Fascism. They died by the millions to stop Hitler. This awesome sacrifice – far more horrible than anything that the West had to endure – does not receive its due outside the former Soviet lands. In the western “truth,” Stalin killed more of his own people than Hitler. The West may applaud the Soviets for repulsing a nasty invader, even under their own nasty regime, but we rarely feel moved to standing ovation.

The truth is that we can hardly count how many war dead the Soviets suffered, nor do we have any common standard to number Stalin’s victims. He was a mass murderer. He was also the hard-nosed leader of a state seeking utopia in the face of a hostile world. Some of the Soviets fought despite Stalin’s shortcomings. Others served gladly because they saw those same qualities as strengths. A few still do.

To modern American eyes, Stalin and his supporters were callous, even to the point of evil. That said, two points should be kept in mind. First, many of Stalin’s victims would have done the same, or worse. The heavy hand of the Communist state wrongfully oppressed millions. The USSR was also home to millions of violent racists and ultra-rightists, who were only prevented from slaughtering their neighbors by that same heavy hand. Certainly, Stalin’s state took its security to paranoid excess, using terror as a weapon, but a frightening reckoning awaited if its iron grip slipped. Whether or not we agree with their choice, many clear-eyed Soviets willingly traded personal freedoms to get the stability Stalin offered.

Second, the Soviets saved the western Allies from a conflict of a far greater magnitude. Some of us would not be here – because our father or grandfather would not have made it back alive – if the Soviets had folded their tent and waited for the Nazi regime to collapse, or for others to take it down.

Alone, the Soviets might have won the war . . . or they might have collapsed, giving the Nazis critical momentum. We’ll never know. The brutal Communist rule may have cost more lives than the Balkan feuding that it prevented. We’ll never know that, either. By turns clumsy and cunning, awful and noble, the early Soviets were hard men negotiating the hardest of times. At a minimum, we can honor their monumental sacrifice by attempting to understand – if not embrace – the tough choices that defined them.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gene Seabolt was the *GURPS WWII* line editor at the time he wrote *GURPS WWII: Iron Cross*. He lives in San Antonio with his wife and sons.

Soviet Union Ranks

<i>MR</i>	<i>Army</i>	<i>Air Force</i>	<i>Navy</i>	<i>Political Officers</i>
8	Marshal Sovetskogo Soyuza*	Marshal**	–	–
8	General Armii†	General Armii	Admiral Flota	Armeisky Komissar
8	General-polkovnik	General-polkovnik	Admiral	Korpusnoy Komissar
7	General-leitenant	General-leitenant	Vitse-admiral	Divizionniy Komissar
7	General-major	General-major	Kontr-admiral	Brigadniy Komissar
6	Polkovnik	Polkovnik	Kapitan Pervogo Ranga	Polkovoy Komissar
5	Podpolkovnik	Podpolkovnik	Kapitan Tret'yego Ranga	–
4	Major	Major	Kapitan-leitenant	Batalionniy Komissar
4	Kapitan	Kapitan	Leitenant	Starshiy Politruk
3	Starshiy Leitenant	Starshiy Leitenant	Mladshiy-leitenant	Politruk
3	Leitenant	Leitenant	Michmann	Mladshiy Politruk
2	Starshina	Starshina	Glavnyy Starshina	–
2	Starshiy Serzhant	Starshiy Serzhant	Starshina Pervoy Stat'i	–
1	Serzhant	Serzhant	Starshina Vtoroy Stat'i	–
1	Mladshiy Serzhant	Mladshiy Serzhant	–	–
1	Efreitor	Efreitor	Starshiy Krasnoflotets	–
0	Krasnoarmeyets††	Krasnoarmeyets	Krasnoflotets	–

A “–” means there is no equivalent rank.

* Called Glavnyy Marshal in branches other than the infantry. Stalin held the ultimate rank of Generallissimus.

† Called Marshal in branches other than the infantry.

** Further air force ranks included Glavnyy Marshal and Marshal Sovetskogo Soyuza.

†† The term Ryadovoy on p. W63 means “ranker,” and began replacing “red army man” as the formal grade in 1943.

As usual, Stalin was no perfect Communist on this issue. He had his favorites and flunkies, and a network of patronage filtered down through both the state and army networks. This was far less widespread than in other countries, however, and generally less reliable, as well. Stalin and most of the men serving him would abandon an underling far more casually than would their counterparts in other cultures. In game terms, this would be reflected by a lower frequency for the Patron's appearance than might otherwise seem appropriate.

Rank see pp. W62, W179

All members of the Soviet armed forces, including state security, have Military Rank as described in *GURPS WWII*.

Party officials – including the political officers in the Red Army – have Administrative Rank rather than Military Rank. It works in exactly the same fashion, but it applies to the party apparatus rather than armed forces. (The entire point of the commissar exercise was that the party, through them, held authority over the military.) Technically, the two functions could overlap in one man, Stalin himself being the most notable example. Only the *highest* of these Ranks should cost points in these cases. A minor party official (Administrative Rank 2) who also was a colonel in the Red Army (Military Rank 6) would purchase only the latter 30-point Rank. The party office would add a bit of color, but very little depth, to his overall authority.

Partisans in the Red Army use their normal Military Rank. A civilian partisan held no formal Rank, even if he was regularly leading hundreds of fighters into battle. Any of those fighters might ignore his commands or even try to usurp his position. A civilian commander should have to work much harder to keep his men in line, to reflect the fact that no outside authority backs his own.

Wealth

see p. W63

The Red Army never paid well. At the beginning of the war, the rank and file qualified for the Poverty (Poor) [-15] disadvantage. For the most part, a Red trooper didn't have much of anything on which to *spend* his rubles, even if they happened to be in his pocket. (Most soldiers signed away their pay to be sent home or invested in war bonds.) Non-rationed consumer goods almost ceased to officially exist during the war, although many items remained available on the city black markets at eye-popping prices.

The Soviet soldier's Poverty disadvantage also reflects the Red Army's material support, as described on p. W63. This was feeble through most of the early war. Bullets, grenades, bandages – even food – rarely arrived in abundance, and too often ran out altogether. In 1943, things began to improve. Increased war production and vast imports of Lend-Lease goods filled out the many deficiencies in equipment. A GM could rule that, from early 1943 or so, Soviet troops use the standard levels of Wealth on p. W63. More realistically, only guards units (p. 32) should be required to make this upgrade. Soviet non-combatants certainly did *not* see any similar improvement in their living standards.

This still doesn't mean there's anything on which to spend rubles. What trade there was took the form of barter – firewood for bacon for vodka for boots and so on – almost all of the time. After the Red Army enters eastern Europe, its troops can simply *take* just about anything that meets their fancy . . .

The official Soviet conversion rate to dollars bordered on pure fiction. To convert to economic values in the *WWII* core book, assume that \$1 equates to 6 rubles. That will put salaries and costs roughly in line with real-world values.

NIGHT WITCH

60 POINTS

Thousands of girls learned to fly in the prewar “club” programs (p. 29). When the war began, many of them volunteered to join the air force. Military officials initially hesitated to send women into aerial combat, but the Luftwaffe’s successes soon convinced them that any help would be welcome in this hour of need.

On Oct. 8, 1941, the air force formed three regiments to be staffed entirely by volunteer female pilots, air crews, and support personnel: the 586th Fighter flying the YAK-1 (p. 84), the 587th flying the SU-2, and the 588th flying the U-2 (also called the Po-2; p. 87). The eager new 588th pilots were assigned to an aged biplane trainer with two seats, roughly converted to carry up to 800 lbs. of ordnance. The plane had no armor, no closed cockpit, no modern improvements of any sort.

The female aviators made do. Bundled up against the frostbitten conditions of open flying in a Russian winter, the 588th took off in their “sewing machines” in all sorts of weather and flew toward the lines at only about 2,800’ – an altitude that left little margin of error in night flying and only barely put them out of danger from their own explosives.

Once over German lines, they usually ended up dancing through AA fire and probing spotlight beams. They learned to attack in trios: Two planes diverted the lights and fire while the third dived to deliver its load, then they traded roles for the next two bomb runs before puttering their way home. At times, the navigators would have to get out and pry the iced-over bombs off their racks, especially if captured German ordnance had been converted to fit their mounts by hand and hammer.

With these nuisance attacks ruining their sleep (p. 99), the Germans took to calling their pesky opponents “the Night Witches.” Rumor in their camps had it that the women took special injections that gave them the nocturnal eyesight of a cat.

Though they lacked magic, the pilots did come to realize that their cheap little biplane was well suited for the job. It almost took work to crash the novice-friendly Po-2, despite its nimble handling. A Night Witch with a fighter on her tail could often shake it – and even trick the Luftwaffe pilot into crashing – by diving dangerously low, then pulling into a steep climb. Her plane would not stall in this attitude; it simply nosed down to pick up what speed it needed. Bf 109s and the like were not so forgiving. Additionally, the Po-2 could take off from or land at the most primitive facilities, allowing the regiment to operate from tiny and almost invisible airfields a few miles behind the lines. It also could be “turned around” – made ready for its next combat flight after returning from the last one – in 5-7 minutes. This proved crucial during periods of busy ground fighting, when the women often were called to fly a dozen or more support missions each and every night.

The Night Witches served throughout the war, with those who survived racking up 1,000 or more combat missions apiece and taking part in the final assault on Berlin.

Attributes: ST 10 [0]; DX 12 [20]; IQ 12 [20]; HT 11 [10].

Advantages: Fit [5]; Military Rank 2 [10]; and 20 points in *National Advantages* (see p. W68). Night Witches may take Acute Vision [2/level] in their *National Advantages*.

Disadvantages: Extremely Hazardous Duty [-20] and -30 points in *National Disadvantages* (see p. W69).

Basic Skills: Aviation (M/A) IQ+2 [6]-14; Gunner (Bombs) (P/A) DX [1/2]-12*; Gunner (Machine Gun) (P/A) DX [1/2]-12*; Navigation (M/H) IQ-1 [2]-11; Piloting (Single-Engine Prop) (P/A) DX+2 [8]-14.

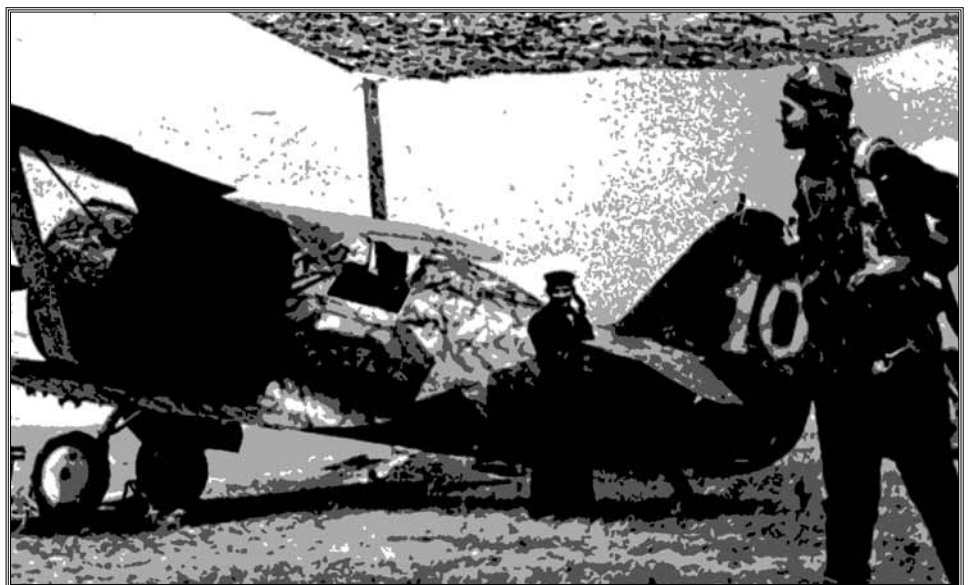
Secondary Skills: First Aid (M/E) IQ-1 [1/2]-11; Mechanic (Propeller Plane Engine) (M/A) IQ-1 [1]-11; Guns (Pistol) (P/E) DX+1 [1/2]-13*; Scrounging (M/E) IQ [1]-12; Survival (Arctic) (M/A) IQ [2]-12.

Optional Skills: Spend 3 points on any of Bicycling, Guns (Rifle), Knife, Swimming, or Parachuting (all P/E); Driving (Automobile) (P/A); Area Knowledge (any) or Telegraphy (both M/E); Administration, Armoury (Vehicular), Electronics Operation (Communications), Meteorology, or Photography (all M/A); or Explosive Ordnance Disposal (M/H).

* Includes +2 for IQ.

Customization Notes: Needless to say, Night Vision would be very useful, if somewhat cinematic. The 1,000-mission veterans in 1945 would be built on *many* more points!

Women in the 586th Fighter Air Regiment would have skills more like those of the *Fighter Pilot* template on p. W83. Those in the 587th Air Regiment would be based upon the *Bomber Crewman* template on p. W82, with skills dependent on crew position. Both of these regiments earned their own honors, but had a large percentage of male leadership and support, and did not generate the German reputation or Soviet press coverage bestowed upon the Night Witches.



POLIKARPOV U-2 (Po-2) LIGHT BOMBER

The “Night Witches” (p. 49) may have been the most celebrated fliers of their little biplane bomber, but it was already famous. The U-2 had been performing many different chores in Soviet aviation for years before the war, and was probably the most common plane in the world then and for many years afterward.

It started out as a failure. Debuting in 1927 as a low-cost biplane trainer, the four panels making up the upper and lower halves of each wing could be swapped out for one another. This sort of economy translated to dreadful handling characteristics, and Polikarpov went back to the drawing board.

A year later, his revised effort flew like day to the original’s night. Small even for a biplane of the period, the U-2 retained its rough and homely looks but answered the stick nimbly and avoided throwing itself into a spin or stall. The military put the plane into production as a trainer and scout later in 1928, and by the time that WWII began more than 13,000 had been manufactured.

During the fighting, the U-2’s role expanded to that of courier, flying ambulance, propaganda machine (with microphone and loudspeaker installed), light transport – and of course, night bomber. When flying by day – and even the Night Witches often were called upon to carry a message by daylight hours – U-2 pilots tried to stay low and slow, hoping that their little cloth-skinned mount would blend into the scenery if a prowling Luftwaffe fighter streaked overhead. They weren’t entirely helpless if a German did pull them into a dogfight (p. 49), but no one confused the obsolete little plane with an actual fighter.

After Polikarpov died in 1944, the Soviets renamed his design as the Po-2 in his honor. By that time, more than 100 regiments were each flying 42 Po-2s in various functions. The crews often called it the *Kuburuznile*, or “corn cutter.” Ultimately, the antiquated little biplane would outlive all of the Luftwaffe models that it had putteringly avoided for the years of the war.

The Po-2 carries a crew of one or two in open cockpits: a pilot and possibly a specialist such as a navigator/bombardier. The pilot sits in front; the specialist sits in back and fires the LMG, which covers the rear arc for defense. The plane burns 3.4 gallons of fuel per hour at routine usage. A full load of fuel and ammo (excluding bombs) costs \$9.

Po-2

Subassemblies: Recon Plane chassis +2; biplane Light Fighter wings +2; two fixed wheels and skid plate +0.

Powertrain: 75-kW gasoline engine with 75-kW prop and 24-gallon standard tank.

Occ: 2 XCS

Cargo: 5.3 Body and see below.

Armor	F	RL	B	T	U
<i>Wheels:</i>	2/3	2/3	2/3	2/3	2/3
<i>All Else:</i>	2/2C	2/2C	2/2C	2/2C	2/2C



Weaponry

Aircraft MG/ShKAS [Body:T] (500 rounds).

Equipment

Body: Bombsight; navigation instruments. *Wings:* 400-lb. hardpoint each.

Statistics

Size: 27’×37’×10’ *Payload:* 562 lbs. *Lwt.:* 1,962 lbs.
Volume: 96 *Maint.:* 87 hours *Price:* \$3,150

HT: 7. *HPs:* 15 *Body,* 68 each *Wing,* 2 each *Wheel.*

aSpeed: 97 *aAccel:* 2 *aDecel:* 50 *aMR:* 12.25 *aSR:* 1
 Stall speed 32 mph. -1 *aSpeed* per loaded hardpoint.
gSpeed: 127 *gAccel:* 6 *gDecel:* 10 *gMR:* 0.5 *gSR:* 2
 Ground Pressure High. 1/6 Off-Road Speed.

Design Notes

Design *aSpeed* is 81. The historical value was used, as well as the actual 357-sf wing area.

Though this Po-2 configured as a night bomber can carry up to 800 lbs. in ordnance, anything over the 562-lb. payload given – and this includes pilot, fuel, any other personnel, and ammunition – will put the plane over its usual weight limit for takeoff. The GM may want to impose a penalty for particularly overburdened night bombers, perhaps -1 to take off or land for every 100 lbs. or fraction thereof over the listed payload.

To keep the plane from being ridiculously agile, the wings’ HPs, cost, and weight were all halved. This is a valid option as long as all three characteristics are reduced in unison.

Technically, equipment could be installed in the wings, just as in monoplane designs. In reality, this probably would not work out and might impair flight performance.

Variants

Some late Po-2s received a 108-kW engine. Field modifications were countless, with agricultural spraying equipment, stretchers, loudspeakers, and whatnot else added to the aircraft as required.

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