

Lavochkin LaGG-3 in 1/72

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IN THE Spring of 1939, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Soviet Union organized a design competition for a new fighter aircraft, with the intent to take advantage of the actual combat experience from the Spanish civil war. Three prototypes from this competition advanced to mass production: Yakovlev's I-26 (later called Yak-1), Mikoyan & Gurevich's I-61 (later called MiG-1), and Lavochkin, Gorbunov & Gudkov's I-22 (later called LaGG-1). The last one later received a more powerful engine and was re-designated as LaGG-3. Almost 7,000 aircraft of this type were produced. The last versions of the LaGG-3 are said to have been comparable in performance to the Bf 109F.



My model represents "LG-3" of LeLv 32, based at the Nurmoila air base in March 1943; designated pilot was Warrant Officer E. Koskinen, who scored a total of 11 aerial victories during the war, most of them with Curtiss Hawk 75s.



My personal interest in the type is due to the fact that in 1942 Finns captured three LaGG-3s which subsequently served with the 32nd Squadron of the Finnish Air Force (LeLv 21, Ilmavoimat). The type was used for patrol and reconnaissance duties.

There are several kits of the LaGG-3 in 1/72nd scale. I am aware of three: Emhar, Eastern Express, and Toko. After acquiring all three, I chose the Toko kit (I believe now issued by Roden), it is quite accurate and reasonably well detailed. It is, in my opinion, "over-engineered" as it is intended to be possible to produce every version of LaGG-3 from the same kit, and the parts do not all fit that well. Consequently, lots of putty was required to get a decent outcome. I added some detail in the cockpit; also, I had to add antenna masts. I decided to open up the canopy, and ended up heat-stretching the sliding part. The kit comes with two slightly different canopies (which was good, because I cracked the first one when trying to separate the windshield from the rest of the part).

All Finnish Air Force LaGGs were painted in the standard Finnish olive green and black splinter camouflage, with light blue undersides. I airbrushed my model with Model Master enamels. Fuselage emblems and tail numbers came from the InScale decal sheet AC013 "LaGG-3 and I-15bis in Finnish Air Force service", wing emblems from the AML decal sheet "Best of Finnish Hawks over Karelian Sky". The green tail number (on the right side of the fuselage) was a nightmare since the InScale sheet had some alignment issues with the white backing color. Testors' Dullcote was used to finish the model.



There are plenty of good reference sources for the LaGG-3. I found the following two especially useful when building this model:

- IPMS Finland: Mallari, Issue No. 47 [an invaluable reference]
- Fighting Lavochkin (Abanshin); Eagles of the East 1; Aviation International 1993 [good cockpit information]

