

# Stalin's Battle Taxis

## Modelling 1/76 scale T34s

Described by one German Panzer General as the best tank in the world the T34 was better known to the Red Army soldiers as the "Queen of the Battlefield" and was to form Russia's armoured spearhead from 1941 to 1945. Delivering the cutting edge to the Soviet advance across Eastern Europe to the very heart of Germany and to the centre of Berlin its self.

More than any other nation involved in the conflict of World War Two the Red Army deployed its armoured forces in close support of its infantry in what became to be known as tank riders. Made up of units of Guards regiments, like the tanks they rode into action they were to take heavy casualties on the road to victory.



Fortunately for the modeller regarding the T34 in 1/76 scale the manufacturers have created a kit rich environment giving us the choice of most of the versions applicable. Starting with the Revell T34/85 this kit was added to the armour range a few years ago and must be one of the best models in this scale with the rendition of the rough cast turret being very good which was a characteristic of this tanks manufacture. Having made the T34 from a number of mainstream manufacturers they all form the basis of making authentic replicas, Last but not least is the Plastic Soldier Company's release of three kits in one boxing giving the choice of the T34/76 and T34/85. This company re-tooled it, shortly after this kits release, to make an even better kit.

## Modelling Detailing and Finishing

Mostly all of my T34s have some signs of wear and tear and battle damage as imagery of the Easter Front often shows one or both of the front mudguards removed and was often the work of the crews to avoid mud and frozen snow and ice from collecting around track and running gear. Unlike Allied and German armour who carried a lot of stowage such as bed rolls fuel and water cans Russian vehicles in the early war years tended to be sparse probably due to the fact Red Army practice and training was to live off the land where possible.



From 1943 onwards, a bigger offensive launched against the Germans, with the advance through occupied countries and into Germany itself. Following the advance into towns and cities red army tanks took on more stowage, probably as a result of "acquiring it" from the local populations they come into contact in their drive to Berlin. Modelling the T34 in dioramas could take this into account by adding the necessary items from cottage industry sources or scratch-built items.

Most if not all armour models need figures and I find that the Hat Industries Russian tank Riders, which include tank crew on four sprue sets, the ideal choice giving you forty four figures all in summer combat dress.

When the Soviet Union entered the war on the side of the allies both the United States and Great Britain each received a T34 for evaluation purposes. These arrived in an overall dark green which was described at the time as black green FS 24052. A good choice for the modeller would be Tamiya's XF-27 black green. As the war progressed production was expanded to many industrial plants and factories this resulted in a variation of paint as each factory in many cases made up its own paint mix.

Having said this i think the modeller is safe in using a number of shades of green, for example I use Tamiya's XF-81 dark green as a more faded application with added weathering powders and washes from various paint ranges.



The use of white and very light grey was used in the winter months as a part of overall camouflage but was of poor quality and transparent in service use.

The use of dark and light earth reddish brown as well as yellow ochre has been recorded but known not to be used on a large scale and tended to appear in the later years and months of the war.

Patriotic slogans and numbers were unique features of Russian tanks and although some are supplied in the decal sheets of kits there is a large range of these available from the Plastic Soldier Company.



Lacking many of the refinements of German and Allied tanks the T34 was probably produced in larger numbers of any other tank in the second world war. What the T34 possibly achieved above any other tank of the period was that it took a nation from near disaster and defeat to total victory, and yes there were other tanks like the KV1 and British and American lend lease to add support in the drive to Berlin but the T34 was known to her crews as a reliable Queen of the Battlefield and that must make it a good reason to model it.

*Peter Terry*

