The T90 tank was a further development of the T72, in competition to the T80, and finally earned a new type name. It's the current main battle tank in the Russian federation and also used and license produced by India.

I bought a 1/72 ACE kit some years ago, their number 72163, a esteemed manufacturer of short run kits, not available from traditional kit producers. As with so many “want to haves”, it disappeared in my stash that becomes a serious confrontation with the capacity left in my life to complete all kits. Yesterday I ran into the new Revell T90 kit number 03190 and yes, I must admit, I bought that one as well.

To, at least, allow other addicts to the modelling business an insight in the two kits content I have made some pictures of the common sprues. As we all do when we have two kits of the same tank by different producers, I compared the main parts and made some comments.

Let's examine their box art first. Both show the T90, Revell from ¾ view and ACE frontal. When you have not looked at the types and history, you would not note remarkable differences.

The Ace box is double their usual thickness and that's explained by the number of sprues coming out of it (eight of them) against the five (containing much less parts) in the Revell box. The instruction manual by Ace is nothing compared to the extensive booklet provided by Revell. This already gives you see the complexity Ace has chosen to deliver and the care needed to unravel their secrets of assembling, in my opinion, too many parts, compared to the very clear stages of assembly of logical parts given by Revell.

Next thing that strikes me is the difference in turret detail and build up between the two brands. The ACE turret is the previous one for T80 provided with the “cheeks” that represent the new shape typical present in the T90. Looking at the details, there is a clear difference in the steep step of the roof downward to the front and the much flatter top represented by ACE. I need to find out if T90 variants exist that justify this or is it a difference in representing the true turret profile. I think the ACE turret is a further development of the T80, while Revell shows the final “K” or “S” type that is in fact a new turret profile with modified topside details. Don't take my word for it though!

Looking at the hull tops next to each other, again the detail provided by Revell is much more defined. Scale wise both hulls are very much the same. As for the hull bottoms, I do not believe we will ever know which bottom detail belongs to which type, I see some very small differences here and if this is correct is truly academic.

When comparing both models, the wheels and tracks differences are significant, the Ace detail being much softer, the size of the wheels slightly smaller and the holes not well defined.  Tracks are slightly wider and not as detailed on the inside as Revell. Again, much work if you want to enhance the details in Ace Parts, as there are many wheels to poke in and scrape around before you get a sharper detail. Reading the booklet by Revell reveals the possible differences in T90 representation in the separate kits: Revell offers specific parts, mostly more or fewer reactive armour blocks or electronic devices to detour missiles, and clearly indicate in their manual what's needed for T90 K or S type.

Ace just lets you have a T90 and that's it.

Looking at transfers, those supplied by Ace also don't really offer you the world, Revell providing two versions: Indian or Russian Federation late type.

My conclusion, after looking at all the sprues and comparing them, is that the Revell kit clearly is the best of both worlds. In the area we're I live it's also the cheapest option and widely available as well. Ace looses out on details and version clarity and also, in my opinion, has been engineered much too complex for fun of building it. The T90 tank history obtained by the information of different versions prompts me to do some desk research, as the history of modern Russian vehicles is not very detailed and the T90 is an interesting vehicle to know more about, another challenge raised by owning both kits.

Against Revell being a good buy and well detailed, ACE might represent an early version for us and then, (sigh!) I need to build the two most different types out of them and Ace becomes useful again. But what the heck, I've got a whole happy life of model building ahead of me when retired, so who am I to complain?

Peter van Kempen, Oktober 2013

(Samples purchased by Author).