



A Dance with Death: Soviet Airwomen in World War II

By Anne Noggle

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In their own vivid words, the women members of the Soviet air force recount their dramatic efforts against the German forces in World War II. These brave women, the first ever to fly in combat, proved that women could be among the best of warriors, withstanding the rigors of combat and downing the enemy.

The women who tell their stories here began the war mostly as inexperienced girls—many of them teenagers. In support of their homeland, they volunteered to serve as bomber and fighter pilots, navigator-bombardiers, gunners, and support crews. Flying against the Luftwaffe, they saw many of their friends—as well as many of their foes—fall to earth in flames. Their three combat Air Force regiments fought as many as one thousand missions during the war.

For their heroism and success against the enemy, two of the women's regiments were honored by designation as "Guard" regiments. At least thirty women were decorated with the gold star of Hero of the Soviet Union, their nation's highest award.

But equally courageous were the women's efforts to show the Red Army that they were entirely adequate to the great role they sought. For even though Stalin had decreed equality for both sexes, the women had to grapple initially with deep distrust from male pilots and Red Army officers, against whom they eventually prevailed.

War, Stalin-era politics, and human emotion mix in these gripping, first-person accounts. Supported by photographs of the women at war, the stories are unforgettable. Portraits of the women as they are now, taken by award-winning photographer Anne Noggle, add the perspective of time to the experiences of the survivors of this great dance with death.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Noggle, a U.S. Women's Airforce Service Pilot during WWII, traveled to Russia several times between 1990 and 1992 to record the reminiscences of 69 Soviet women airforce veterans. Trained as combat pilots, mechanics, navigators and ground crews after Stalin ordered the formation of three all-female air regiments in 1941, their mission was primarily defensive. A number of them became aces—i.e., they shot down five or more enemy planes. This was the first instance of widespread employment of women in combat by a major power. The women talk about their reasons for joining, the extremely rigorous training and harsh living conditions, the way the Soviet military system dealt with them collectively and individually and the role they played in tactical operations. There is plenty of adventure, emotion and drama in these pages, and readers will note that the experiences of these women were hardly different from those of their male counterparts. Noggle writes movingly of the continuing friendships among the survivors (about 100 are still alive) and their twice-yearly meetings in Moscow for a vodka-fueled, sisterly celebration. Most moving of all: the noble photos taken by Noggle of these veterans in old age.

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Review

"Anne Noggle's *A Dance with Death: Soviet Airwomen in World War II* captures an extraordinary—if largely unknown—episode in Soviet Russia's epic struggle with Nazi Germany. Through first-person accounts Noggle records how women air personnel found themselves at the cutting edge of air war against the Luftwaffe. Their story possesses a full measure of danger and personal heroism. No future history of the Soviet Air Force will be complete without reference to this compelling book."--Von Hardesty, curator, National Air and Space Museum Smithsonian Institution
(Von Hardesty, curator, National Air and Space Museum Smithsonian Institution)

About the Author

Anne Noggle, herself an American Woman Airforce Service Pilot in World War II, has made lengthy visits to Moscow to conduct more than seventy interviews and to photograph the Soviet airwomen. Noggle is a captain in the U.S. Air Force (retired), a former curator of photography and now adjunct professor of art at the University of New Mexico, and recipient of three National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship Grants and a Guggenheim Fellowship. She has also written other articles and books, including *For God, Country, and the Thrill of It: Women Airforce Service Pilots in World War II*, published by Texas A&M University Press.

Users Review

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Death: Soviet Airwomen in World War II is our recommendation so you keep up with the world. Why, as this book serves what you want and want in this era.

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