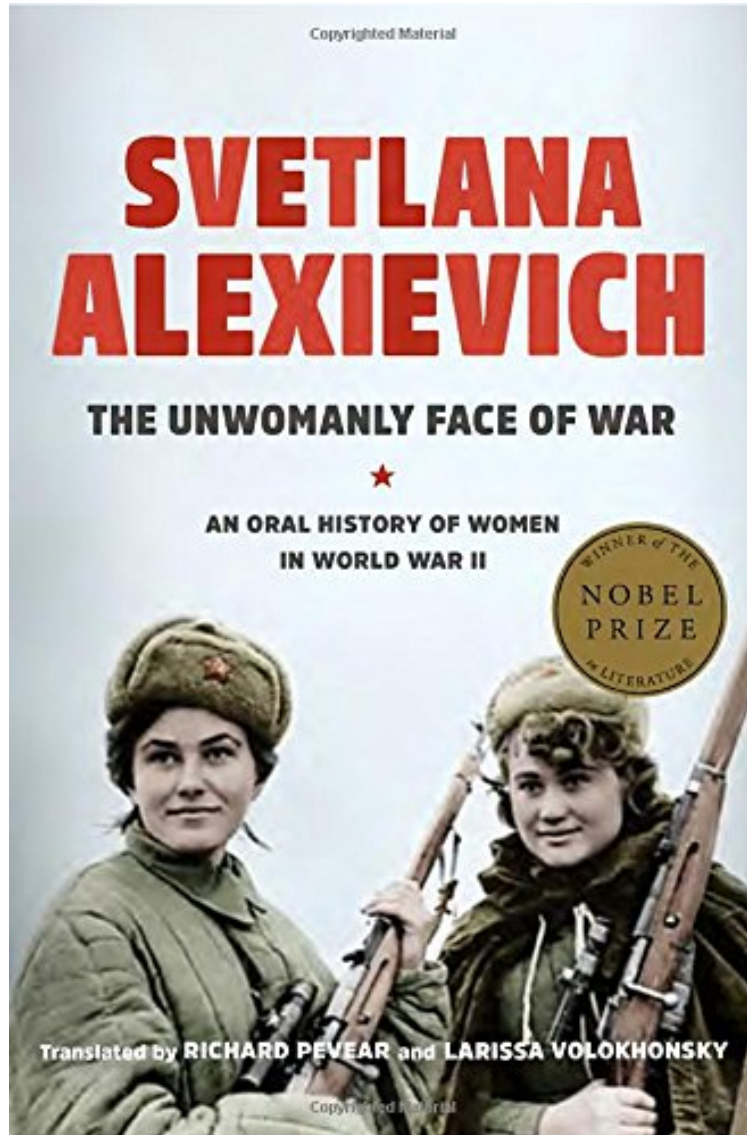


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The Unwomanly Face of War: An Oral History of Women in World War II

Svetlana Alexievich

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Svetlana Alexievich : The Unwomanly Face of War: An Oral History of Women in World War II before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Unwomanly Face of War: An Oral History of Women in World War II:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Fascinating reading. By zinnia Alexievich manages once again to make war real. It is not something you watch in 30 minute clips on TV. What is really interesting about this book is the idealism the women express. They were dedicated to serving their country. Their stories are moving. It is a shame it took so long to translate this book into English. It was written in 1985. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Extremely interesting perspective on WWII. By RMSA superb oral history. Presents significant insights into what combat was like in World War II on the Eastern Front as well as the social and political experience of Soviet citizens--of both genders--from the late 1930s to the fall of the Soviet Union. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A terrific book. I gained a new appreciation for the ... By Leslie B. Conklin A terrific book. I gained a new appreciation for the suffering and devastation suffered by the residents of the Soviet Union during the invasion by Germany. The narratives are short and easy to read; together they send a profound message about humans, especially women, and war.

A long-awaited English translation of the groundbreaking oral history of women in World War II across Europe and Russia from the winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature. A landmark. Timothy Snyder, author of *On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century* For more than three decades, Svetlana Alexievich has been the memory and conscience of the twentieth century. When the Swedish Academy awarded her the Nobel Prize, it cited her invention of a new kind of literary genre, describing her work as a history of emotions . . . a history of the soul. In *The Unwomanly Face of War*, Alexievich chronicles the experiences of the Soviet women who fought on the front lines, on the home front, and in the occupied territories. These women more than a million in total were nurses and doctors, pilots, tank drivers, machine-gunners, and snipers. They battled alongside men, and yet, after the victory, their efforts and sacrifices were forgotten. Alexievich traveled thousands of miles and visited more than a hundred towns to record these women's stories. Together, this symphony of voices reveals a different aspect of the war: the everyday details of life in combat left out of the official histories. Translated by the renowned Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky, *The Unwomanly Face of War* is a powerful and poignant account of the central conflict of the twentieth century, a kaleidoscopic portrait of the human side of war. But why? I asked myself more than once. Why, having stood up for and held their own place in a once absolutely male world, have women not stood up for their history? Their words and feelings? They did not believe themselves. A whole world is hidden from us. Their war remains unknown . . . I want to write the history of that war. A women's history. Svetlana Alexievich THE WINNER OF THE NOBEL PRIZE IN LITERATURE for her polyphonic writings, a monument to suffering and courage in our time. A monument to courage . . . It would be hard to find a book that feels more important or original. . . . Alexievich's account of the second world war as seen through the eyes of hundreds of women is an extraordinary thing. . . . Her achievement is as breathtaking as the experiences of these women are awe-inspiring. The Guardian Magnificent . . . Alexievich charts an extraordinary event through intimate interviews with its ordinary witnesses. . . . After decades of the war being remembered by men writing about men, she aims to give voice to an aging generation of women who found themselves dismissed not just as storytellers but also as veterans, mothers and even potential wives. . . . Distilling her interviews into immersive monologues, Alexievich presents less a straightforward oral history of World War II than a literary excavation of memory itself. The New York Times Book Review A remarkable project . . . Women did everything this book reminds and reveals. They learned to pilot planes and drop bombs, to shoot targets from great distances. . . . Alexievich has turned their voices into history's psalm. The Boston Globe Harrowing and moving . . . Alexievich did an enormous service, recovering these stories. . . . The *Unwomanly Face of War* tells the story of these forgotten women, and its great achievement is that it gives credit to their contribution but also to the hell they endured. The Washington Post

A monument to courage . . . It would be hard to find a book that feels more important or original. . . . Alexievich's account of the second world war as seen through the eyes of hundreds of women is an extraordinary thing. . . . Her achievement is as breathtaking as the experiences of these women are awe-inspiring. The Guardian Magnificent . . . Alexievich charts an extraordinary event through intimate interviews with its ordinary witnesses. . . . After decades of the war being remembered by men writing about men, she aims to give voice to an aging generation of women who found themselves dismissed not just as storytellers but also as veterans, mothers and even potential wives. . . . Distilling her interviews into immersive monologues, Alexievich presents less a straightforward oral history of World War II than a literary excavation of memory itself. The New York Times Book A remarkable project . . . Women did everything this book reminds and reveals. They learned to pilot planes and drop bombs, to shoot targets from great distances. . . . Alexievich has turned their voices into history's psalm. The Boston Globe Harrowing and moving . . . Alexievich did an enormous service, recovering these stories. . . . The *Unwomanly Face of War* tells the story of these forgotten women, and its great achievement is that it gives credit to their contribution but also to the hell they endured. The Washington Post Alexievich has forged her own distinctive identity: as a witness to witnesses who usually go unheard. . . . In a post-truth era when journalism is under pressure, susceptible to propaganda, sensationalism, and alternative facts, the power of documentary literature stands out more clearly than ever. . . . Listen to Alexievich. The Atlantic A very different kind of war book . . . In undertaking the hundreds of interviews that led to this vast,

emotionally riveting account, the author wants us to consider the women's voices. . . . [Alexievich] weaves their testimonies together until their individual voices become a haunting chorus. . . . At a time when Americans and Russians once again find ourselves in a strange relationship not a Cold War, but not the allies we were during World War II there's something powerful about such close access to these women's feelings. *Newsday* A revelation . . . Alexievich's text gives us precious details of the kind that breathe life into history. . . . In the book, women talk about experiences that no one had written about before Alexievich. . . . As well as showing her readers the war through women's eyes, Alexievich gives us an idea of how the army women were perceived by society, during the war and afterwards. . . . These voices, thanks to Alexievich, have themselves become part of history. *Financial Times* [A] remarkable collection of testimonies . . . Sitting at kitchen tables, Alexievich coaxes out of the women stories that describe a reality vastly different from the officially sanctioned version. . . . They speak guardedly but vividly of fleeting encounters, deep relationships, unexpressed feelings. *The New Yorker* We should resolve to read this book alongside the world news report. . . . Ms. Alexievich never tries to simplify. . . . Refusing to pass judgment, crediting all, she listens, suffers and brings to life. . . . It took years and many miles of traveling to find and capture all the testimonies here. . . . We still end up feeling that we have been sitting at her side. With her, we hear the memories of partisans, guerrilla fighters trapped behind the lines. *The Wall Street Journal* Continually shocking and tearjerking . . . Alexievich a recipient of the Nobel Prize for Literature and a brilliant practitioner of the art of oral history lent hundreds of Soviet women veterans an ear in the early 1980s and listened and listened. . . . The introductory materials here, in which Alexievich quotes from the journals she kept while working on the project and from her later reflections and dealings with censors, are as compelling as the primary text. *The Christian Science Monitor* A terrific (and terrifying) counter-history of World War II . . . A vision with moral clarity . . . [Alexievich] goes straight into these off-limits areas, not content to merely cast light from a distance. . . . [She] assembles her works of documentary literature like a composer, orchestrating material from thousands of hours of tape-recorded interviews; her sense of structure is idiosyncratic, lyrical, flowing, extremely readable. Every chapter is a movement, every interviewee an instrument. *AV Club* Reveals the harrowing, brave, and even quotidian memories of Soviet women whose voices were nearly stifled by the mores of history. These accounts fight our ingrained ideas about what makes a war story. *Sloane Crosley, Vanity Fair* Inspiring . . . Alexievich organizes what she describes as a history of the soul from the war's first confused year to its bittersweet aftermath. . . . Always, in Alexievich, History gives way to history: the official, heroic story of what happened gets undone by the equally heroic but much more messy story of everyday life and how people actually felt. *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* Alexievich gives voice to the hundreds of thousands of women who served in World War II. . . . The stories translated from the Russian by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky are abundant, compelling and fresh. *Minneapolis Star-Tribune* A powerful and deeply moving document . . . giving voices to the women who served alongside their male counterparts only to have been rendered invisible, afterward, through sexist societal and bureaucratic systems. *Vice* Groundbreaking . . . a mosaic of Russian women's stories from the home front to the front lines, from foot soldiers to cryptographers to anti-aircraft commanders. *Elle* A landmark in the study of female soldiers . . . [Svetlana Alexievich's] method is the close interrogation of the past through the collection of individual voices; patient in overcoming cliché, attentive to the unexpected, and restrained in exposition, her writing reaches those far beyond her own experiences and preoccupations, far beyond her generation, and far beyond the lands of the former Soviet Union. *Timothy Snyder, author of On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century* Alexievich's artistry has raised oral history to a totally different dimension. It is no wonder that her brilliant obsession with what Vasily Grossman called the brutal truth of war was suppressed for so long by Soviet censors, because her unprecedented pen portraits and interviews reveal the face of war hidden by propaganda. *Antony Beevor, author of Stalingrad: The Fateful Siege* [Alexievich moves] away from military narrative and [tells] the tales of Soviet women who took on male roles, fought on the front lines, killed and got killed, but still looked at the shattered world around them from a feminine perspective, focusing on human suffering and basic emotions free of any pathos. *Newsweek* A mighty documentarian and a mighty artist . . . Her books are woven from hundreds of interviews, in a hybrid form of reportage and oral history that has the quality of a documentary film on paper. But Alexievich is anything but a simple recorder and transcriber of found voices; she has a writerly voice of her own which emerges from the chorus she assembles, with great style and authority, and she shapes her investigations of Soviet and post-Soviet life and death into epic dramatic chronicles as universally essential as Greek tragedies. *Philip Gourevitch* Alexievich has gained probably the world's deepest, most eloquent understanding of the post-Soviet condition. . . . [She] has consistently chronicled that which has been intentionally forgotten. *Masha Gessen* About the Author Svetlana Alexievich was born in Ivano-Frankivsk, Ukraine, in 1948 and has spent most of her life in the Soviet Union and present-day Belarus, with prolonged periods of exile in Western Europe. Starting out as a journalist, she developed her own nonfiction genre, which gathers a chorus of voices to describe a specific historical moment. Her works include *The Unwomanly Face of War* (1985), *Last Witnesses* (1985), *Zinky Boys* (1990), *Voices from Chernobyl* (1997), and *Secondhand Time* (2013). She has won many international awards, including the 2015 Nobel Prize in Literature for her polyphonic writings, a monument to suffering and courage in our time.