

Evelyn Zegenhagen, “Schneidige deutsche Mädels.’ Fliegerinnen zwischen 1918 und 1945“

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English Abstract

The first comprehensive, extensively researched study of German women sport pilots between 1918 and 1945 is based on the biographies of a large number of newly and some rediscovered women pilots in Germany - about eighty motor and one hundred glider pilots.

The author’s approach to reflect the women pilots in the context of their social and cultural existence and activities rather than to represent them in the fragmented history of their individual biographies, underlines the author’s thesis that women pilots acted in close dependence on the social, economic and political conditions of their era. German female sport pilots rarely saw themselves as emancipated, but rather were ambitious to contribute to the restoration of Germany’s reputation after the lost World War. Although seriously limited in their professional options in aviation, they strove to perform record-setting flights within and outside Germany, and thus propagated German politics and propaganda before and after 1933.

A special chapter is devoted to the many hundreds of women glider pilots and their clubs, existing on the margins of the aviation world, and in bitter competition with the male pilots of the National Socialist Flying Corps. The women pilots’ downfall commenced in the mid-1930s, when there was no need anymore to hide Germany’s aggressive military ambitions behind the sensational flights of female fliers.

The book was submitted as a dissertation at the University of German Armed Forces in Munich-Neubiberg in 2007, and was awarded the Hugo-Junkers-Preis der deutschen Luftfahrtresse in 2008.