



## American author and cultural activist, M. G. Crisci discusses books, spies and lies with the RUSSIA NOW TV Network.



SELECT EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEW:

**Q. Why a book about Russian hero?**

About five years ago two events changed my view of the world, forever: I met a Russian cabdriver, Boris, a PhD. In computer sciences. He explained, "I drive car five years since immigrate because of poor English." For some reason, I asked what surprised him most about America? He said sadly, "27 million dead World War 2, nobody remembers."

Sometime later, a little known exhibit that came to the United States, *World War II through Russian Eyes*. As I walked the exhibition, I felt Boris's pain. At that moment, despite being the son of Italian-American immigrants with no Russian ancestry, I decided to write a book that would inform and entertain ordinary Americans about the little-known Russia contributions to freedom.

My research led me to a virtually unknown Moscow teenager, Lilia (Lydia in Russian) Litvyak, who overcame all the odds to become the world's first female flying ace. Her missions, her solo kills, and the fact that she became Hitler's worst public relations nightmare, would become my metaphor to sensitively tell the Russian story of war and life and love. The fact that she completed 268 missions, shot down 15 Messersmitts, was shot down at 21, and her remains were lost for over 40 years, made a good story great. Eventually, one book (*Call Sign, White Lily*) became two, plus editorials, interviews, blogs and speeches, in America and Russia.

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**Q. As an American, how could you accomplish these things?**

We told everybody we met in America, Russia and Ukraine, what we were trying to do. They opened their hearts, donated their time to teach me about life in a distant lands. We ate, lived, drank and laughed together. Most importantly we now have deep memories, new friends, unique pictures, and the belief that we have tried to make the world a little better place.

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**Q. Are all Russian diplomats considered spies in the United States?**

I would have no idea. I can only tell you that the Russian and American cultural officials we have met in the United States and Russia have all been gracious and supportive of our non-political cultural activities. They seem intrigued by our ability to gain the trust and cooperation of ordinary Russians, without any quid quo pros.

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**Q. How will these lies and spy allegations effect US and Russia relations?**

Respectfully, I would suggest you talk to the CIA or FBI or whomever handles such matters. I'm just a passionate storyteller using his skills to try to do the right thing. The question is way out of my league.

MEDIA:

**Video Interview**

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**American Center  
for Democracy,  
Moscow**