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Anna Politkovskaya *No to Fear*

DOMINIQUE CONIL

TRANSLATED BY ALISON L. STRAYER

The deeply researched and partly imagined story of the fearless, internationally recognized journalist who was assassinated for believing that ‘words can save lives.’

Say *No to Fear*, part of the They Said No series tells the story of Anna Politkovskaya’s courageous life narrated from the perspective of her longtime mentor and friend, the dissident writer Vassily Pachoutinsev. From their first meeting when she was a young literature student to her rise as an internationally recognized journalist, we see Anna become a fearless defender of human rights. Throughout the author brings the history to life by including key conversations that might have happened between them at pivotal moments in Politkovskaya’s life.

A scathing critic of the second Chechen war, Politkovskaya published most of her political work while working at a newspaper at the forefront of the fight for free expression in Russia. For their outspokenness several members of its staff were murdered, presumably silenced by Russia’s Vladimir Putin and Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov. Even after a poisoning attack and a mock execution, Politkovskaya persisted until her assassination in 2006.

The narrator, Pachoutinsev, explains how her legacy lives on, inspiring those in pursuit of justice and the truth both in Russia and abroad.

Chronology

- 1978 Anna Mazeppa, a student, marries Sasha Politkovski, also a student. A few months later their first child, Ilya, is born.
- 1980 Anna Politkovskaya graduates with a degree in journalism.
- 1985 Mikhail Gorbachev, General Secretary of the Communist Party, launches a policy of economic, political, and cultural liberalization with *perestroika* and *glasnost*.
- 1986 On April 26, a reactor at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant explodes.
- 1989 The Berlin Wall falls.
- 1991 The end of the USSR is proclaimed. Gorbachev resigns and Yeltsin is elected. Chechnya declares its independence.
- 1994 The First Chechen War begins.
- 1996 In July, Boris Yeltsin is re-elected.
- 1999 Boris Yeltsin appoints Vladimir Putin, head of the FSB, as prime minister. Anna Politkovskaya starts working at the *Novaya Gazeta*. On August 31, the first attack on Chechnya begins in a series that leaves more than three hundred dead and thousands injured. The Second Chechen War begins.
- 2000 In February, Grozny falls. In March, Vladimir Putin is elected with over 50 percent of the vote.
- 2001 Anna Politkovskaya receives the Golden Pen Prize of the Russian Union of Journalists and the Amnesty International Global Award for Human Rights Journalism.
- 2002 On October 23–26, the Moscow theater hostage crisis occurs. On the twenty-sixth at dawn, the Russian special forces diffuse gas in the theater. The victims number 170.
- 2004 Vladimir Putin is re-elected with 70 percent of the vote.
- 2005 In March, the Chechen president-elect and guerrilla leader Aslan Maskhadov is killed by Russian forces.
- 2006 On October 7, Anna Politkovskaya is found shot dead in the elevator of her apartment building in Moscow.
- 2007 In November Ramzan Kadyrov, a former leader of the Chechen security service, becomes prime minister of Chechnya, supported by Vladimir Putin.
- 2009 In January, Stanislav Markelov and Anastasia Baburova are murdered in public. In July, Natalya Estemirova is kidnapped and killed. All three worked for the *Novaya Gazeta*.

- 2014 Anna Politkovskaya's murder goes to trial: a former Russian policeman and three Chechen mercenaries are sentenced, but no contractor. Russia annexes Crimea (Ukraine), triggering European sanctions.
- 2015 Opposition leader Boris Nemtsov is murdered, setting off mass protests in Moscow.
- 2020 Alexander Lukashenko is re-elected in Belarus. The election is highly contested, with demonstrations throughout the country. Five hundred journalists are arrested.
- 2021 More than fifteen Belarusian journalists are still detained. They are often given harsh sentences of up to eighteen years in prison on various pretexts.
- December 10, 2021 Journalists Dmitry Muratov and Maria Ressa receive the Nobel Peace Prize.
- December 27, 2021 Gulag historian Yuri Dmitriev is sentenced to fifteen years in prison after a fabricated trial.
- December 28, 2021 The Russian Supreme Court dissolves the NGO Memorial.

For More Information

BOOKS

Is Journalism Worth Dying For?: Final Dispatches, by Anna Politkovskaya

Putin's Russia: Life in a Failing Democracy, by Anna Politkovskaya

A Russian Diary, by Anna Politkovskaya

Gomorra: A Personal Journey into the Violent International Empire of Naples' Organized Crime System, by Roberto Saviano

In the Country of Men, by Hisham Matar

Comradely Greetings: The Prison Letters of Nadya and Slavoj, by Slavoj Žižek and Nadya Tolokonnikova

Read & Riot: A Pussy Riot Guide to Activism, by Nadya Tolokonnikova

VIDEO AND FILM

Summer Palace, by Lou Ye

Putin's Palace, by Alexei Navalny, published online following his arrest: www.youtube.com/watch?v=mMxqTae75Fs

A Thousand Cuts, by Ramona Diaz on Maria Ressa

Conference, by Ivan I. Tverdovsky

"Murder in Malta" on Daphne Caruana Galizia: youtube.com/watch?v=gywojofqtXo

LINKS

forbiddenstories.org

Forbidden Stories

Hold the Line for Maria Ressa: betc.com/en/socit/hold-the-line

Reporters Without Borders:

rsf.org/en

Committee to Protect Journalists:

cpj.org/2021/12/number-of-journalists-imprisoned-around-the-world-sets-new-record

Journalism Trust Initiative:

journalismtrustinitiative.org

International Memorial:

memo.ru/en-us/memorial/mission-and-statute

Novaya Gazeta:

novayagazeta.ru/articles/2021/11/30/russia-explained

Amnesty International:

amnesty.org

Elena Kostyuchenko at Hunter College:

youtube.com/watch?v=ikFJKVJy3zA

Elena Kostyuchenko, “Russia’s Propaganda War”:

youtube.com/watch?v=bazDuUJ9RCQ