



A Russian Diary: A Journalist's Final Account of Life, Corruption, and Death in Putin's Russia

Anna Politkovskaya

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Anna Politkovskaya, one of Russia's most fearless journalists, was gunned down in a contract killing in Moscow in the fall of 2006. Just before her death, Politkovskaya completed this searing, intimate record of life in Russia from the parliamentary elections of December 2003 to the grim summer of 2005, when the nation was still reeling from the horrors of the Beslan school siege. In *A Russian Diary*, Politkovskaya dares to tell the truth about the devastation of Russia under Vladimir Putin—a truth all the more urgent since her tragic death.

Writing with unflinching clarity, Politkovskaya depicts a society strangled by cynicism and corruption. As the Russian elections draw near, Politkovskaya describes how Putin neutralizes or jails his opponents, muzzles the press, shamelessly lies to the public—and then secures a sham landslide that plunges the populace into mass depression. In Moscow, oligarchs blow thousands of rubles on nights of partying while Russian soldiers freeze to death. Terrorist attacks become almost commonplace events. Basic freedoms dwindle daily.

And then, in September 2004, armed terrorists take more than twelve hundred hostages in the Beslan school, and a different kind of madness descends.

In prose incandescent with outrage, Politkovskaya captures both the horror and the absurdity of life in Putin's Russia: She fearlessly interviews a deranged Chechen warlord in his fortified lair. She records the numb grief of a mother who lost a child in the Beslan siege and yet clings to the delusion that her son will return home someday. The staggering ostentation of the new rich, the glimmer of hope that comes with the organization of the Party of Soldiers' Mothers, the mounting police brutality, the fathomless public apathy—all are woven into Politkovskaya's devastating portrait of Russia today.

"If anybody thinks they can take comfort from the 'optimistic' forecast, let them do so," Politkovskaya writes. "It is certainly the easier way, but it is also a death sentence for our grandchildren."

A Russian Diary is testament to Politkovskaya's ferocious refusal to take the easier way—and the terrible price she paid for it. It is a brilliant, uncompromising exposé of a deteriorating society by one of the world's bravest writers.

Praise for Anna Politkovskaya

"Anna Politkovskaya defined the human conscience. Her relentless pursuit of the truth in the face of danger and darkness testifies to her distinguished place in journalism—and humanity. This book deserves to be widely read."

—Christiane Amanpour, chief international correspondent, *CNN*

"Like all great investigative reporters, Anna Politkovskaya brought forward human truths that rewrote the official story. We will continue to read her, and learn from her, for years."

—Salman Rushdie

"Suppression of freedom of speech, of expression, reaches its savage ultimate in the murder of a writer.

Anna Politkovskaya refused to lie, in her work; her murder is a ghastly act, and an attack on world literature.”

–Nadine Gordimer

“Beyond mourning her, it would be more seemly to remember her by taking note of what she wrote.”

–James Meek

From the Hardcover edition.

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Elaine Gold:

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