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Colleagues Honor Slain Russian Journalist With a Book and Demand Justice

By [C. J. CHIVERS](#)

MOSCOW, May 30 — The independent Russian newspaper Novaya Gazeta on Wednesday officially began sales of a bound collection of articles and commentary by [Anna Politkovskaya](#), its special correspondent who was killed last year, and renewed its demand for an honest investigation of the crime.

The public call for justice underscored anew the deep tensions between the remnants of [Russia's](#) independent news media and the authorities, who have replaced most of the principal outlets of public political dissent with government-controlled programs and Kremlin-friendly content.

Ms. Politkovskaya, 48, was one of the fiercest domestic critics to emerge in post-Soviet Russia. With her writing, she campaigned against what she saw as a proliferation of official brutality and corruption in the government under President [Vladimir V. Putin](#) and the horrors and endemic crime that have accompanied the wars in Chechnya.

In return she was treated as a nonperson, barred from appearing on television and shut out by the Kremlin. She died in October in what was apparently a contract killing, shot several times with a pistol as she entered her apartment building in Moscow after returning from a nearby food store.

The case, which is under investigation, is the latest in a line of killings of journalists in Russia that remain without resolution, and it has made her a posthumous symbol of the diminished media freedom here.

The collection of her work, a brick-thick volume of 980 pages, bore a photograph of her intent face beside a title of two words: "For What."

[Mikhail S. Gorbachev](#), the former Soviet president and a co-owner of the newspaper to which Ms. Politkovskaya brought fame, joined her editors, friends and family in calling for the crime to be solved.

He said the case was especially important because much of Russian society thought that law enforcement officials had been involved in her killing. Using words that did not criticize Mr. Putin directly, Mr. Gorbachev also spoke of Russia's need for independent journalists.

"There is a great need for such people," he said. "Maybe now the need is even greater than before."

Mr. Gorbachev later held a copy of the book and suggested that while Ms. Politkovskaya's writing was painful for some to read — it often accused government officials, soldiers and police officers of crimes — it was ultimately helpful to the Russian state.

"It is bitter," he said. "But it is a medicine."

Ms. Politkovskaya's colleagues at Novaya Gazeta also spoke with frustration about the pace of the official investigation, saying they had cooperated with law enforcement agencies but had not seen a result.

They added that they had refrained from publishing materials their own work had turned up, because they did not want to endanger the official case or its sources of information. But they expressed worry that the official investigation would be whitewashed and said that if such a course became evident, they would be compelled to publish their findings.

"If we see the political resolution is about to be imposed, we will run all of the material that we have," said Dmitri Muratov, the paper's editor in chief.

The renewed demand for progress in the investigation occurred as the International Federation of Journalists, a Brussels-based private organization, held its congress in another section of the city and faced a continued chill from the Kremlin. The federation said it had selected Moscow for its round of meetings, which it holds every three years, in part to bring attention to the deteriorating environment for independent journalism in Russia.

Among the materials circulated at the congress was a booklet with an essay by Igor Yakovenko, general secretary of the Russian Union of Journalists, titled "The Torn Profession."

The essay summarized the Kremlin's control and manipulation of Russia's public political dialogue, saying the union's monitoring of the Russian news media had found that "pro-president and ruling party propaganda amounted to roughly 30 percent of the total amount of information" in 2000, but rose to 92 percent in 2006.

"Spin doctors and propagandists, not journalists, are today the face of all federal TV channels," Mr. Yakovenko wrote.

Kremlin officials have ignored invitations to attend and speak at the event.

Aidan White, general secretary of the international federation, left the congress briefly in the afternoon to lend support to the calls for progress in the investigation of Ms. Politkovskaya's killing. "Unfortunately this is a country that appears to have a culture of impunity" with respect to crimes against journalists, he said.

He added that he had heard from Russians this week that every attack against a journalist "is fully investigated until it has come to a successful dead end."

Not everyone at the event was anti-Kremlin. Mr. Gorbachev struck a distinct line, paying tribute to Ms. Politkovskaya but also speaking in defense of Mr. Putin. The Russian president, he said, saved the country from chaos and set it on the right course.

"What has been done by Putin deserves a high estimate," he said. Press freedom, Mr. Gorbachev added, requires time to develop. He made no comment on the removal of dissent from televised news.

As was often the case in recent years with Ms. Politkovskaya, the events on Wednesday passed without official notice. Western journalists and several Russian newspaper reporters were in attendance, but official domestic news sources avoided coverage.

After Mr. Putin rose to power, Ms. Politkovskaya was blocked from televised appearances. Consistent with the findings of Mr. Yakovenko's essay, the release of the book and the call for an honest investigation were not mentioned on the evening news.

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