Heart of darkness

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It is 29 August 2004, and Anna Politkovskaya has travelled to the remote village of Tsentoroy, in south-eastern Chechnya, to interview the „deranged” boss of the Chechynan militia, Ramzan Kadyrov, the favourite of Vladimir Putin who wields the real power in Chechnya.

He keeps her waiting six or seven hours and night has fallen before she sets eyes on his „fatuous degenerate countenance”. The lengthy interview that follows is chilling for his „baby-dragon” fostered by the Kremlin, then let loose on the hapless people of Chechnya to torture and kill – and tell the world the story. She risks her life in so doing, but then she does that every day. She is not fearless, but, indeed, strong; and her outrage at the everyday horrors she sees around her lends her an ironclad courage.

Politkovskaya journeys into the heart of darkness to learn the truth about Kadyrov – this „baby-dragon” fostered by the Kremlin, then let loose on the hapless people of Chechnya to torture and kill – and tell the world the story. She risks her life in so doing, but then she does that every day. She is not fearless, but, indeed, strong; and her outrage at the everyday horrors she sees around her lends her an ironclad courage.

Politkovskaya’s diary covers the period from December 2003 to August 2005.

She describes the Russian president’s farcical election campaign, asking the question „How did Putin get re-elected?” The answer, backed up by numerous examples: by abolishing the rule of law, violating electoral legislation, purchasing or intimidating the few candidates prepared to stand against him (including Ivan Rybkin, who fled to London), and scaring to death, sometimes literally, potential opposition.

Also, laments Politkovskaya, by exploiting the „sickness” of the Russian people, „most of whom are suffering from paternalism, which is why Putin gets away with everything, why he is possible in Russia.” And if the oligarchs, the government and the bureaucracy are the object of her scorn and loathing, her despair at the apathy of her fellow-citizens, the lack of serious political opposition and the increasing self-censorship of the press, runs like a red thread throughout the book.

The events described in the diary take place against a background of terrorist atrocities, brutal racist attacks by the ever-growing fascist youth movements, to which the security services turn a blind eye, abductions, killings and individual horror stories.

One of the strengths of Politkovskaya’s narrative is the juxtaposition of the Big Picture with individual human stories. The explosion in the Moscow Metro does not remain an anonymous slaughter: we „meet” two of the victims, Alexander Ishunkin, a young officer in the armed forces, in Moscow to buy spare parts and see friends, and 17-year-old Vanya Aladiin, „a lively, cheerful, friendly boy people called Hurricane Vanya”. Elsewhere, incompetence and brutality in the army is sickeningly illustrated by the stories of Alexanders Slesarenko and Sobakaev and Yevgeny Fomovsky, three of the innumerable victims.

Another strength is the use of arresting images that graphically capture a personality or situation: the physical isolation of Putin during his inauguration, or the slouching insolence of Kadyrov, Christmas – in an orphanage outside Moscow, with little Danila „sticking out like a candle from the adult arms of a carer”, and at the ski-resort of Couchevel, with the oligarchs and other new rich eating eight kinds of oysters and drinking wine at £1,500 a bottle.

She also describes the cover-ups following the Nord-Ost hostage-taking and the attack on the Beslan school, two of the lethal results of self-censorship in the media.

If there is anyone around who still believes Putin is Europe’s ally against Bush’s America, the diary of the woman who has been called „Russia’s lost moral conscience” will open their eyes – to present horrors and future dangers: one should listen when Politkovskaya warns that „Russia is in danger of turning into a national socialist state armed with nuclear weapons”.

And when she pleads that if no one is ready to fight, the curtailing of our freedoms will soon reach the point of no return.

The book is beautifully produced, with a foreword by fellow journalist, Jon Snow, maps, an index and invaluable glossaries.

Arch Tait’s translation reads fluently; the tone is authentic: the sober, factual language of the professional journalist, shot through with the cold fury of the increasingly isolated activist and the desperate sympathy of the caring human being.

As we know, Anna Politkovskaya was not murdered in Chechnya on 29th August 2004 but in the stairwell of her Moscow apartment building on Saturday 7 October 2006. It was Vladimir Putin’s 54th birthday. The Russian president couldn’t have wished for a better gift than for someone to rid him of this „turbulent” journalist.

This article or section may contain spoilers about the final boss. You might want to avoid reading further if you don't want to spoil the surprise for yourself! The Heart of Darkness is the final form of the final boss of the Darkest Dungeon. Classified as COSMIC, it has a terrible ability called Come Unto Your Maker, which instantly kills a hero - regardless of HP or stress. The player must select which one of your heroes dies, meaning you have to be strategic as to who should stay and who should die. The Heart of Darkness was a mystical crystal that enclosed the spirits of an evil race of snake people â€“ the Ophidians. Eons ago, early humans and the Ophidians waged war for control of the Earth. Over the years, the Ophidians were beaten to the point of extinction. Hoping to find a way to strike back, a group of warriors performed a ritual which placed their souls in the Heart of Darkness. Fearing what would come, ancient man built a temple around the site of the ritual, which was to be guarded for Heart of Darkness (1899) is a novella by Polish-English novelist Joseph Conrad about a narrated voyage up the Congo River into the Congo Free State in the Heart of Africa. Charles Marlow, the narrator, tells his story to friends aboard a boat anchored on the River Thames. This setting provides the frame for Marlow's story of his obsession with the successful ivory trader Kurtz. Conrad offers parallels between London ("the greatest town on earth") and Africa as places of darkness.