

INSIDE RUSSIA: TRAITORS AND HEROES



A FILM BY
ANASTASIA POPOVA & PAUL MITCHELL

55 mins / 2023 / Russian, English Subtitles / United Kingdom



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2023 DIG Investigative Journalism Awards - Best Longform Investigative Documentary

SYNOPSIS

Inside Russia: Traitors and Heroes documents an extraordinary year in the lives of ordinary Russians. Amidst the brutal suppression of anti-war protests across the country, a local politician condemns the war on social media. She must decide whether to face criminal charges or flee the country. A group of young graffiti artists begins a campaign of subversive art to mock the government's pro-war propaganda. Soon one of its members is arrested. It has been dangerous for ordinary Russians to speak up against Vladimir Putin's regime for years. New censorship laws, introduced since the invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, have made it tougher than ever. Many thousands have fled Russia. Dissenting Russians must decide if they should flee their homeland or voice their dissent.

DIRECTORS' STATEMENT

Respect the audience. Respect the contributors. Respect the people on the ground. And above all, respect the story.

The idea and the intent that drove this film was to record and make available to audiences outside Russia intimate stories of peoples' lives inside Russia. From outside Russia, it's become almost impossible to understand what its citizens think and what choices they face; independent journalism there is now essentially illegal. We started filming in the early days after Russia launched the full-scale war on Ukraine and continued as the war dragged on into months. We recorded stories of lives upended. Some people were incredibly brave. Others found ways to embrace the war – or ignore it.

To make it happen, a collective of talent came together. First and foremost among them are my co-director, the immensely talented Nastia Popova and her partner and husband, the producer Misha Kozyrev. Others can only be credited with pseudonyms for reasons of security.

But the very nature of a film with so many talented contributors presented a huge challenge in filmmaking craft. There were different directors on the ground, working with different camera teams. The material that came into our edit suites in London reflected that. My unique responsibility was to make sure that all the material was woven together to create an organic whole. Nothing in the film should feel out of place, both in content and in style. And I set myself an additional challenge: I wanted to honor their directorial intent of Nastia and her colleagues in Russia as we wrestled with the material. So as the edit progressed, we continued to consult, debate, collaborate. It was the harder way to work, but also, the better way.

One final note – I kept a slim book on my bedside table throughout the process, Olesya Khomeychuk's **The Death of a Soldier Told by His Sister**. This is the story of a fallen Ukrainian soldier and the impact on his family. I wanted a constant reminder that the suffering inside

Russia, however real, however painful, was a consequence of Russia's decision to invade Ukraine.

Paul Mitchel

Most things lost their meaning for me after Russia started its full-scale war with Ukraine. Time divided into BEFORE and AFTER. Russian society has split between those who support this war and those who are against it. My husband, an independent journalist and producer worked at opposition channel TV Rain, had to flee Russia for fear of being arrested. I watched families torn apart; lives being broken... It was very frightening. Together with fellow cameramen, we started to film what was going on, looking for powerful stories, filming the context on the streets of Russian cities. Meanwhile my husband became acquainted with Paul Mitchell who became interested in our project and introduced us to BBC. This is how "Inside Russia" came together. Our family moved to Amsterdam in October 2022. Inside Russia just received the Best Longform Investigative Documentary award at the Modena Festival in Italy in October 2023.

Anastasiya Popova

FILMMAKER BIOGRAPHIES

Paul Mitchell – Co-Director

Paul Mitchell began his career at ABC News in Moscow during the collapse of Communism. A fluent Russian speaker, he was working as a local-hire editor/sound-recordist when Nobel laureate Andrei Sakharov was released from detention – and ended up interviewing the great man and cutting a package for the US evening news. He came to international attention with "The Death of Yugoslavia" (BBC 1995) rated by the British Film Institute as one of the 100 greatest British television programs of any genre. As both a director and a showrunner, he has made award-winning series on subjects as diverse as Scottish Independence **Yes/No: Inside the IndyRef** (BBC 2019), perestroika under Gorbachev **The Second Russian Revolution** (BBC 1990), the Obama presidency **Inside Obama's White House** (BBC 2016), pop culture in the Global South **Alternative Rock and Roll Years** (Discovery 2003), US politics, **The Clintons: A Marriage of Power** (C4 1998), the Middle East Channel's' The Iraq War (BBC/National Geographic 2012). Russia has remained a speciality, with definitive Putin series on both BBC - **Putin: Russia & the West** (2012) and Channel 4 – **Putin: A Russian Spy Story** (C4 2020) and one of the first investigations into the now- infamous Wagner Group **Haftar's Russian Mercenaries** (BBC, 2021). He has also done frontline war reporting from Chechnya for PBS Wide Angle: **Greetings from Grozny**. (Edward R Murrow Award, FIPA 2003 Prix de Jury de 15 Chicago International Television Awards and the Rory Peck winning **Inside Chechnya** (BBC 1999). Among his many awards are the Primetime EMMY, the Peabody, the du-Pont Columbia Gold Baton, the BAFTA, the Grierson.

Anastasiya Popova – Co-Director

Anastasiya Popova was born in Norilsk is a city located beyond the Arctic Circle in Siberia. After moving to Moscow, she graduated from the State Institute of Television and Radio with a degree in Directing. Anastasiya has directed more than 20 full-feature documentaries, most of them about art, culture, history and nature. Many of her films broke box office records and won Russian national awards.

Mikhail Kozyrev – Producer

Mikhail Kozyrev was born in Yekaterinburg in the Urals Mountains, Russia in 1967. He graduated from Sverdlovsk State Medical University with a doctorate degree. Then Mikhail worked as a resident in the Oldenburg Center for Modern Languages and International Relations at Pomona College in Claremont, CA. He hosted the radio show "Music of Bolsheviks Kids and Babushkas" at KSPC 88.7FM. Mikhail began his media career in Russia in 1994. He launched and handled programming for several national radio stations (Radio Maximum, Nashe Radio, Ultra FM). Mikhail also created a number of major music festivals including MaxiDrome and Nashestvie. Since 2010 Mikhail hosted and produced several shows on the Russian independent channel TV Rain. TV Rain was very critical of Putin, so it was shut down during the first days of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine. He had to leave Russia. Like most independent journalists and artists, Mikhail was declared "a foreign agent," a label that is used to declare someone an enemy of the state. Now Mikhail continues to work at TV Rain which is now broadcasting from Amsterdam Netherlands. His family, wife Anastasia and their twin daughters, now live in the Netherlands. In the first days of war, they decided to make a documentary about what was going on in Russia. After contacting a few production companies in London Mikhail met Paul Mitchell who believed in the project and presented it to the BBC and Storyville.

PRODUCTION CREDITS

Directors	Anastasia Popova & Paul Mitchell
Producers	Mikhail Kozyrev & Daria Olevskaya
Executive Producers, BBC Storyville	Emma Hindley, Lucie Kon
Film Editors	Guy Creasey, Haukje Heuff
Composer	Felix Erskine
Camera	Valdis Celmins, Fedor Gerlaine, Paul Junger, Trofim Korchagin, Gennady Ostrovsky Dmitry Prischepa, Ilya Yakolev

A BBC Storyville Co-Production With Ronachan Films For BBC World Service