

*„It would be good if many people could see this film. Especially politicians who kiss and embrace Russian politicians, almost dizzy with the smell of oil and gas!“*

Vaclav Havel,  
writer, former dissident and later President of Czech Republic while awarding  
„LETTER TO ANNA“

## **LETTER TO ANNA**

**The story of journalist Politkovskaja's death**

**A film by Eric Bergkraut**

### **PRESS KIT**

(by April 28, 2008)

Switzerland/Germany 2008, 83 minutes, HDcam, shot 2003-2007 in Russia, England and Switzerland.

Production:

p. s. 72 productions GmbH  
Brandschenkestrasse 72  
CH-8002 Zürich Switzerland  
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in coproduction with  
zero one film Berlin  
SF/SRG SSR idée Suisse, ZDF/3sat, MDR, RBB

Homepage (including trailer): [www.lettertoanna.com](http://www.lettertoanna.com)

World sales:

Filmstransit / Jan Rofekamp [info@filmstransit.com](mailto:info@filmstransit.com) for Northamerica, contact  
New York: Diana Holtzberg, [diana@filmstransit.com](mailto:diana@filmstransit.com)  
Accent films international / Carol Spycher [info@accentfilms.com](mailto:info@accentfilms.com) for the rest of  
the world

## **Synopsis**

On October 7, 2006, Vladimir Putin's 54th birthday, the journalist Anna Politkovskaja is shot in the lift of her Moscow home. Anna's death is a personal tragedy: she has just learnt that she is to become a grandmother. But the murder is also a political act, for Politkovskaja was the President's fiercest critic. Why was she shot in cold blood, this elegant woman who was always on the side of the weak and those who had no rights? Was it because of the stance she took against the war in Chechnya – a war that was virtually ignored in the world at large and yet became a turning point in Anna's life? – LETTER TO ANNA – a personal quest, but also a political film.

## **Vaclav Havel Award**

*CINeUROPA*

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*March 12, 2008*

*Awards – Switzerland*

*Letter to Anna wins Vaclav Havel Award*

*Heading the jury at the 10th One World International Human Rights*

*Documentary Film Festival in Prague, writer and former president of the Czech Republic Vaclav Havel presented the award that bears his name to the Swiss documentary Letter to Anna on March 13.*

*The title received its premiere screening in Berlin on February 10 as part of the Cinema for Peace event and will soon be presented at the Visions du Réel Festival in Nyon (April 17-23).*

*The film by Eric Bergkraut paints a cinematic portrait of Russian journalist Anna Politovskaïa, who was assassinated in Moscow in October 2006. The Swiss director had met her in 2003 when making his documentary Coca – The Dove from Chechnya.*

*Mathieu Loewer*

## **VACLAV HAVEL'S SPEECH**

**(Prague 13.03.2008)**

*I am here in order to bestow a prize. It is called after me: the Vaclav Havel award. I have decided to offer this reward to those of you who made the film "Letter to Anna". It is a film without any pathos. It does not need special effects. On the contrary, it is sober and factual. Nevertheless, the film is*

*fascinating, one could almost say thrilling.*

*A film about a woman who was exceptionally brave. She knew the risks she was taking but never hesitated because she knew what she was fighting for. Those who have read Anna Politkovskaya's diary know that her writings are a thorough and realistic analysis of the situation in her country, devoid of any fanaticism.*

*I think that it would be good if many people could see the film. Especially politicians! It would be particularly useful to watch for politicians who kiss and embrace Russian politicians, almost dizzy with the smell of oil and gas!*

(Speech available on dvd/Czech with english subtitles)

### **Eric Bergkraut / Awards / Latest films**

LETTER TO ANNA: Vaclav Havel Award 2008

THE SORCER FROM ENTLEBUCH: Award SV-Foundation 2007

COCA, THE DOVE FROM CHECHNYA: Int Human Rights Film Award Berlin 2007, Marl Award Human Rights 2007, Rudolf Vrba Award Prague 2006

LETTER TO ANNA	2008
THE SORCER FROM ENTLEBUCH	2007
AGOTA, NEUF ANS PLUS TARD – AGOTA, NINE YEARS LATER	2006
COCA, THE DOVE FROM CHECHNYA	2005
THE FLYING ABBOT	2003
KONTINENT K. – CONTINENT K.	1997
OGGI SIAMO TUTTI UN PO' BENE – LET'S BE GOOD JUST FOR TODAY	1992

## LETTER TO ANNA / Director's note

*I actually wanted to make a completely different film – about how partners choose each other in different cultural backgrounds and why our so-called freedom of choice does not always bring about happiness. Then came October 7, 2006... I heard about Politkovskaya's death on the car radio and immediately thought about the recordings I still had in which she featured. Some of our conversations were very personal.*

*At first I fought against it, but ultimately I had no choice and it soon became imperative for me to make LETTER TO ANNA. I have to say that I don't think Politkovskaya was always right. She was human and therefore fallible. But I do have the impression that she always strove for the truth, was seemingly fearless, and consistent in every respect. She never made life easy for anyone.*

*My memories of Anna are of an elegant woman, discerning and self-critical. She deserves to have the background to her murder brought into the open.*

## CREDITS

Written and directed by	Eric Bergkraut
Coauthor	Thérèse Obrecht Hodler
Photography	Laurent Stoop
Editing	Vendula Roudnicka
Music	Marie-Jeanne Serero Quatuor Modigliani
Assistant director	Anja Kofmel
Second unit camera	Yuri Burak, Olivier Taieb, Adrian Zschokke
Narration assistant	Martin Witz
Production assistant	Irma Birchler
Coordination postproduction	Christian Müller
Mix	Roberto Filafarro
Recordings	Daniel Hobi
Online/ Colour Grading	Beat Morell
Title Design	Petra Jörger
Translations	Ruslan Bazgiev, Thérèse Obrecht Hodler David Roscoe

Narrations and selected voice-overs in cooperation with Cinema for Peace by Susan Sarandon (english version), Iris Berben (german version), Catherine Deneuve (ferench version)

Commissioning Editors

SF

Urs Augsburger, Frank Hubrath,  
Beat Wieser

TSI

Luisella Realini

TSR

Irène Challand

ZDF/3sat

Inge Classen

MDR

Katja Wildermuth

RBB

Rolf Bergmann

Producer

Eric Bergkraut

Coproducers

Jaka Bizilj, Cinema for Peace

Thomas Kufus, zero one film

Archives:

Zainap Gashayeva, Politkovsky Family,  
Gregor Sonderegger, Laurent Stoop,

With the support of Federal Office of Culture Switzerland, Migros Kulturprozent, Corymbo Foundation

## **MEDIA / PRESS**

Available

15 min dvd/PAL on the Berlin premier including quotes on the film Vera and Ilya (Anna's kids), Garry Kasparow, Bob Geldof

CBC television 30 minutes report on the film and it's director

CBC radio, 15 min interview

Assorted quotes will follow

## **BBC**

Last Updated: Monday, 11 February 2008, 12:20 GMT

Printable version

Slain Russian writer in new film

A new documentary about the murdered Russian investigative journalist Anna Politkovskaya contrasts starkly with other red-carpet events at the Berlin Film Festival, the BBC's Tristana Moore reports.

*Anna Politkovskaya*

*Politkovskaya's reports exposed alleged abuses of power by officials*

*The premiere of Eric Bergkraut's documentary Letter to Anna, at the Berliner Ensemble Theatre, attracted its fair share of stars, including Catherine Deneuve. But there was a sombre atmosphere.*

*Cinema For Peace - an international charity gala and a platform for peace and tolerance at the Berlin festival - is not for an audience of popcorn-eaters.*

*"How come I am still alive? When I really think about it, it's a miracle," - the words of Ms Politkovskaya haunt the documentary about her life.*

*The film, narrated by Susan Sarandon in the English version, is based on interviews with the journalist and other conversations with her friends, relatives and colleagues.*

*'Courageous'*

*Anna Politkovskaya was shot dead in the lift of her apartment block in Moscow in October 2006. She was a fierce critic of human rights abuses in the Chechnya war.*

*She stood for values that she believed were of the utmost importance and she paid an ultimate price*

*Garry Kasparov*

*Russian opposition activist*

*Swiss director Bergkraut met Ms Politkovskaya while he was making another film about Chechnya, called Coca: The Dove from Chechnya.*

*"Anna does not die in the film, freedom dies... she is very much alive, she is even funny. She was severe with herself and with the truth. I really felt a kind of obligation to tell her story, I had the footage," said Bergkraut.*

*"Anna had a lot of courage... maybe to see a woman who is very courageous looking for the truth may help us all be more courageous," he added.*

*The journalist's son, Ilya Politkovsky, said he still was hoping that his mother's killers would be brought to justice.*

*"It is really important for me to see my mother laughing in the film, walking around, as a normal person, a normal mother, not a soldier," Ilya said.*

*"I am sure there will be an outcome of this investigation. I am hoping that the whole story will come out, from the people or person who ordered the killing, to the killer," he said.*

*'Cover-up'*

*Russian opposition activist Garry Kasparov - a former world chess champion - also attended the premiere of the film.*

*Garry Kasparov stands near the house where Ms Politkovskaya was killed  
Mr Kasparov says the Politkovskaya investigation is a "mockery"*

*"I think it's very important that the story of Anna Politkovskaya is presented from different angles," Mr Kasparov said.*

*"The film includes her own words, those who supported her and loved her, and the villains who hated her, and most likely were behind her horrible murder... she stood for values that she believed were of the utmost importance and she paid an ultimate price.*

*"We have seen no tangible results yet from the investigation into the murder of Anna Politkovskaya. I think the investigation is another mockery and cover-up that Putin's regime uses to hide its real intentions," he said.*

*Bergkraut said he did not set out to discover who was behind the journalist's murder.*

*At the end of the documentary, there is no answer to her son's question: who gave the orders?*

## **VARIETY**

**'Anna' sends out strong message**

**Film played to packed festival fringe screening**

**By NICK HOLDSWORTH**

**A documentary tribute to the murdered Russian journalist and Kremlin critic Anna Politkovskaya was turned down by the Berlinale's Forum.**

*Instead, "Letter to Anna" by Swiss producer/director Eric Bergkraut, played to a packed festival fringe screening Sunday that counted Russian opposition coalition leader and former chess grandmaster Garry Kasparov, ex-German*

*foreign minister Joschka Fischer; Bob Geldof and Catherine Deneuve in its audience of around 300.*

*The film tells the story of the campaigning reporter's life -- and tragic slaying in the lobby of Moscow apartment where she was gunned down in October 2006.*

*Bergkraut met and filmed Politkovskaya during the making of his documentary "Coca the Dove From Chechnya," about the Chechen women who record human rights abuses by the Russian army.*

*"Anna was part of that film -- not the main protagonist and I ended up with lots of wonderful, strong footage of her," Bergkraut said. "When I heard the news on the radio that she had been murdered I was shocked but not surprised."*

*Narrated by Susan Sarandon, the film tells the story of the fearless and dedicated campaigner for human rights through the footage Bergkraut shot in 2003-04 and through the eyes of her children Ilya and Vera, Novaya Gazeta newspaper editor Dmitry Muratov, ex-husband Alexander Politkovsky, and anti-Putin activist Kasparov.*

*Illya Politkovsky said the family had seen and approved of the film. "The film has absolutely no chance of being shown in Russia on television (which is under heavy state control) but maybe it could get arthouse release."*

*Bergkraut confirmed Sunday that the film had been turned down by the Forum. The screening at the hastily arranged venue was the film's first public screening and he hoped it would be more formally presented as a premiere at a festival soon.*

*Deneuve, who has recorded a voice over for a French language version, told Variety that "it was the least I could do to help fight for the truth."*

*At Sunday's screening Kasparov said he did not know who killed Politkovskaya but he had "no doubts" that the order came from "the inner circle" of the Kremlin.*

*Bergkraut urged Putin and world leaders including German chancellor Angela Merkel, French president Nicolas Sarkozy, Britain's prime minister Gordon Brown and US president George Bush to help reveal the truth about who killed her.*

## **VARIETY II**



Letter to Anna: The Story of Journalist Politkovskaya's Death  
Ein Artikel zu viel: Der Mord an Anna Politkowskaja (Documentary --  
Germany-Switzerland)

By DEREK ELLEY

A P.S.72 Prods. (Switzerland)/Zero One Films (Germany) production, in  
association with SF, ZDF/3sat, MDR/RBB, Cinema for Peace. (International  
sales: Accent Films Intl., Montreux, Switzerland.) Produced by Eric Bergkraut.  
Co-producers, Jaka Bizilj, Thomas Kufus. Directed by Eric Bergkraut.  
Screenplay, Bergkraut, Therese Obrecht Hodler.

With: Anna Politkovskaya, Vera Politkovskaya, Andrei Mironov, Yuri Chaika,  
Elena Kudimova, Dmitri Muratov, Ilya Politkovsky, Andrei Nekrasov, Elena  
Tregubova, Alexander Politkovsky, Boris Berezovsky, Sainap Gashayeva, Garry  
Kasparov.

Narrator: Susan Sarandon (English version).  
(Russian, English dialogue)

*The 2006 murder of crusading Russian journalist Anna Politkovskaya gets a cool-headed, quietly insistent analysis in "Letter to Anna." Swiss-based documaker Eric Bergkraut, who'd come to know Politkovskaya while making "Coca: The Dove From Chechnya," mixes leftover footage from that docu with interviews conducted after the journo's death, resulting in a film that's part personal tribute, part sociopolitical essay. Very much in the liberal-humanist tradition of Euro docus, rather than harder-nosed investigative journalism, pic will fit comfortably into fest and upscale tube skeds.*

*After being strangely turned down by the Berlin fest's Forum section (in which "Coca" had played in 2005), docu was privately shown to an invited audience on Feb. 10, during (but separate from) the Berlinale. A 50-minute version was broadcast on German TV later that month. Feature-length version will officially world-preem at Toronto's Hot Docs fest in April.*

*Bergkraut puts his creepiest material right up front, starting with a reconstruction of the fateful afternoon of Oct. 7, when Politkovskaya was shot by an unknown assassin by the elevator in her apartment building. CCTV screen caps show Politkovskaya entering the building seconds before her death and also her killer, his face obscured by a baseball hat.*

*Helmer had several hours of unused footage of Politkovskaya walking and talking during 2003-04 from his docu on Chechnya, a subject on which the journalist had taken a fierce stand, branding the Russian government's policy "genocide." Three other journalists for Novaya Gazyeta -- one of the last independent newspapers in Russia -- had already met with untimely deaths, so*

*Politkovskaya knew exactly the high-stakes game she was playing. As her editor Dmitri Muratov says, "Her only protection was her name."*

*Politkovskaya always claimed she was against the policies of Putin rather than the president himself, though no one interviewed is in any doubt that the order to kill her must have come from very high up in the Russian government. In a supreme irony, Politkovskaya died on Putin's own birthday (she was 48; he was 54).*

*Docu's weirdest aspect is the sight of a woman talking about her probable fate some two years before it actually transpired. Very calmly, and very rationally, Politkovskaya makes it clear her death is likely, and that she has always prepared herself for it, like a soldier. In 2004, she had barely survived being poisoned on a plane en route to covering the Beslan school hostage crisis.*

*Though all interviewees -- from colorful businessman Boris Berezovsky to opposition leader (and former chessmeister) Garry Kasparov -- paint contempo Russia as a lawless dictatorship, Politkovskaya herself comes across as an elegant, soft-spoken but stubborn woman for whom the situation was just a fact of life. But as members of her family -- including ex-husband Alexander Politkovsky and daughter Vera -- repeatedly hint, there was more to her than Bergkraut's camera actually captures.*

*Pic could do with some tightening in its repetitious second half, which has too many shots of Politkovskaya walking around Moscow. But HD tech credits are of high quality throughout, and English narration by Susan Sarandon matches Bergkraut's approach in its non-hectoring tone.*

Camera (color, HD), Laurent Stoop; editor, Vendula Roudnicka; music, Marie-Jeanne Serero, Quatuor Modigliani; sound, Roberto Filaferrero; assistant director, Anja Kofmel. Reviewed at Berliner Ensemble theater, Berlin, Feb. 10, 2008. (In Hot Docs Film Festival, Toronto -- competing.) Running time: 83 MIN.