



THE NEW GREATNESS CASE

A DOCUMENTARY BY ANNA SHISHOVA

FI/HR/NO 2022, 92 minutes, HD

PRODUCED BY VLAD KETKOVICH, IIKKA VEHKALAHTI, SINIŠA JURIČIĆ AND TORSTEIN GRUDE

CINEMATOGRAPHY BY ALEXANDRA IVANOVA

MUSIC BY KARLIS AUZANS

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER INA FICHMAN

Anya was an ordinary teenager who dreamed of making life in Russia better.

In March 2018 she was arrested and incarcerated on charges of forming an extremist group with the aim to violently overthrow the government.

During three following years her mother Julia desperately struggles to prove her daughter's innocence.

Fighting for justice and learning the real state of affairs step-by-step, Julia has been transformed from an apolitical citizen into a passionate human rights activist.

Autlook Filmsales GmbH
+43 670 208 7881
welcome@autlookfilms.com

AUTLOOK
FILMSALES

NRCS


nukleus
FILM


PIRAYA
FILM

THE CASE

It all began when Anya joined an internet forum, where young people chatted about music, ecology and current affairs. Many were critical of Putin's politics. One of the members of the chat, calling himself Ruslan D, was particularly outspoken in criticizing Putin's regime.


Ruslan suggested that they should meet in person. A dozen members, including Anya, agreed. Several times they gathered at McDonalds, but then Ruslan D rented a small office for their meetings. It was later revealed that he had outfitted the office with hidden cameras. He insisted that they become a "proper political movement" and proposed a pathetic title for their group: "The New Greatness".

Ruslan D shaped the group to fit the Russian State's description of an "extremist organization" as defined by the legislation. He created leaflets and also taught individuals in the group how to make Molotov cocktails, secretly filming them all the while. Then, he turned the "incriminating evidence" over to the police.

All ten members of "The New Greatness" were arrested, some of them tortured and forced to make false testimonies against each other.



Anya in the courtroom
during hearings

A woman with dark hair, wearing sunglasses and a dark jacket over a white and blue striped shirt, is sitting at a desk. She is looking down at a laptop. The background is slightly blurred, showing what appears to be an office setting. The overall tone is somber and investigative.

Ruslan D in the office
of the organization
[Hidden camera footage]

BACKGROUND

In the spring of 2017, the protest movement in Russia saw a new phenomenon. All of a sudden, thousands of young people took part in peaceful protests. Born and formed during the Information Age, the post-millennials had a different outlook on the world and are not tainted with the residual fear often found in the older generations of Russians. They are not afraid.

The surge of protests among the young was sudden and overwhelming. It caught the Russian authorities by surprise and they felt properly threatened. The next generation had spoken.

The authorities panicked. They responded by bringing down an iron fist and quickly introduced a whole set of new Draconian laws and regulations – many of them in stark contrast with the Constitution of the Russian Federation.

All across the country, hundreds of young people were reprimanded, fined and, in some cases, imprisoned; not only for the ‘crimes’ of taking part in peaceful rallies, but for as much as making a comment on social media or reposting a picture in a private blog.

The intimidation campaign went further. The Secret service, FSB, started fabricating criminal cases against activists to make an example of them and frighten and demoralize others. There were numerous instances of torture being used to secure false confessions. In its crusade against freethinking, the FSB used the Internet not just to spy and gather information, but to set traps for the innocent.

In our film we are focusing on one particular case, which became the testing ground for new methods of cyber-entrapment.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

When I first learned about the New Greatness case, my daughter was six months old. Filming our characters and developing close relationships with them, I was deeply touched by the helplessness of these people in the face of this iniquity. It was frightening to realize that anyone, at any moment, could find themselves in their place. I was aware of political repression in Russia before, but since I learned more about this case I started to fear for the future of my own child. This is a very unpleasant feeling by the way. As a documentary filmmaker, the only thing I could do was to make this film. We started production in 2018 when there were still a few independent media outlets in Russia, and at least so-called "authorized" protest rallies were still possible.

Through the story of our characters, we witnessed firsthand how our society plunged into totalitarianism, fear and violence.

During our filming period all independent media were banned and hundreds of new political cases appeared. More and more activists, who were determined to protest, have been imprisoned and tortured. It was these processes that made possible and caused the terrible war that Russia unleashed against Ukraine. The war actually started long before February 24, 2022, when Putin's regime began to successively destroy any opposition within Russia. In **The New Greatness Case**, we uncover the methods of the state's repressive machine.

Despite everything, there are still brave people in Russia who openly oppose the war and Putin's regime. I want these people to be heard, I want to support them, also through this film.



Julia on a solitary picket
near the Kremlin wall

PRODUCER'S STATEMENT

In 2014 I started producing resistance films, opposing Russian state politics with the methods that I knew and could use.

We made a film that opposed the laws that discriminated against members of the LGBT community in Russia, one about Russian young people who did not want to go to the army, a documentary featuring Russian protest artists, and a film about growing militarization in Russia.

During this period laws became more strict and an abundance of political prisoners were put in jail. More than that, in 2014 Russia launched the hybrid war against Ukraine. So, when director Anna Shishova approached me in 2018 with the idea to make a film that told the real story about the special services and their ongoing efforts or repress the voices and actions of young people in Russia I felt like I needed to do this film together with Anna. It was my ethical, civilian and political choice.

The work on the film took us four long and difficult years, and Anna did a really great job combining the investigative line with the emotional story of a family going through a nightmare in the best Kafkaesque tradition.

Today, in retrospect, it's clear to me that Putin was deliberately re-installing the worst features of the USSR – suppression of rights and freedoms, militarization of society, the special services' abuse, and the use of propaganda to indoctrinate the nation with the goal of unleashing the inhumane war on the neighboring state of Ukraine. The importance of our film is that it reveals the terrible methods of the Russian secret police, and through the private story of one family it gives a bigger and ominous picture of Russian society.

This film could not be done without huge joint efforts of a lot of people, that I want to thank and express my respect for: Human right organizations in Russia; our characters - strong fighters against the regime; our co-producers and so many talented professionals who helped this film to be created.

Unfortunately we have to launch the film in a harsh time, when Putin's regime has finally revealed to the whole world its true form commencing the real war.

I want to finalize my statement with words of support to Ukraine and Ukrainians and to all the people who fight for freedoms, democracy and a better future for Russia and for Ukraine.



THE CREW

ANNA SHISHOVA, DIRECTOR

I'm a documentary filmmaker based in Tel Aviv. I graduated from Moscow State University with a degree in Modern Russian History in 2008, before going on to study for my second degree in documentary filmmaking in VGIK (Gerasimov Institute of Cinematography in Moscow). I graduated in 2013. Between 2012 and 2013 I participated in an exchange program between VGIK and SADA (Stockholm Academy of Dramatic Arts). In 2016 I took part in the American Film Showcase international documentary workshop organized by the U.S. Department of Educational and Cultural Affairs and the USC School of Cinematic Arts (San-Francisco). My two documentaries - "Katya" and "On the Edge" enjoyed great success with critics and won a number of National and International awards. I've been working as a freelancer, making documentaries and commercial videos. Over the last couple of years my husband and fellow filmmaker Dmitry Bogolyubov and I collaborated on several documentaries in association with ARTE. Among them "Town of Glory" that has been made also with the support of Czech TV.



VLAD KETKOVICH, PRODUCER



Vladislav Ketkovich was born in Moscow in 1971. In the 1990s he worked in the field of visual anthropology and ethnography, and organized several expeditions to Asia, Africa and the Amazon. Published materials in Geo, Nat. Geographic, Oriental Collection, and other media. Taught natural history in the US National Park for a year. In 2000 he founded film company Ethnofund. Graduated a number of European production seminars, including EAVE. Produced over 30 documentaries, independently and in international co-productions. These films were shown on TV channels ARTE, ZDF, WDR, MDR, ORF, YLE, Lion Capitale TV, The Guardian, Czech Television, and others, and became participants and winners of such film festivals as CPH:DOX, Zurich IFF, El-Gouna IFF, HotDocs, IDFA, Krakow IFF, DokLeipzig IFF, GoEast IFF, München IFF, DocAviv IFF, ArtDocFest, Shanghai IFF, Moscow IFF, etc. The films cover social life in modern Russia. Vlad is one of a few Russian independent producers who works with protest topics. Also worked a lot as line producers for a number of European productions and tv channels. Currently staying in France.

IIKKA VEHKALAHTI, PRODUCER, EDITING AND SCRIPT SUPERVISOR



Executive Producer of a legendary Rough Cut Service and Dare To Dream Asia, Iikka Vehkalahti needs no introduction. His own company IV Films is producing and tutoring documentary films. Iikka was a Commissioning Editor for the Finnish Broadcasting Company, YLE Documentaries, in Finland from 1998 until March 2015. He was an Executive Producer for Steps For The Future and is one of Generation Africa project also.

IV Films is one of the main producers of Machines by Rahul Jain and co-producer in Winnie by Pascal Lamche. Both were awarded at Sundance 2017. His last production, Rahul Jain's Invisible Demons had a premier 2021 at Cannes. Rough Cut Service worked with more than 100 films, many of them festival winners.

SINIŠA JURIČIĆ, PRODUCER

Born in 1965 in Zagreb. He graduated in production from the Academy of Dramatic Art in Zagreb in 2009. He founded the Nukleus Film in 2009, and Nukleus Film Slovenia in 2012. Films he has produced have been awarded and funded in and outside the country, with the most acclaimed awards being France 4 Visionary Award for Ilian Metev's "Last Ambulance in Sofia", which was screened in the competition selection of the 51st Cannes Film Festival Criticism Week, and the Grand Prix for the same film at the festival in Karlovy Vary. The film has toured over 70 world festivals, won 15 awards, and honors for Peter Kerekes 'Velvet Terrorists, which won the Critics' Award at Karlovy Vary in 2013 and entered the FORUM part of the Berlin Film Festival 2014 where it won the award audience. He also produced "Chris the Swiss", animation-documentary that was also screened as the part of Semaine de la Critique in 2018. and later won three main national film prizes in Switzerland. He is a member of the European Film Academy and the production networks of EAVE, ACE and Inside Pictures.



TORSTEIN RUWÉ YUXINAWÂ GRUDE, PRODUCER



Based in Stavanger, Norway. Grude is the owner of Piraya Film AS and its subsidiary Hinterland AS. He is a director, cinematographer and producer devoted to the creation of documentary films with global reach and impact.

With a focus on truth-seeking, love, solidarity, decency and peace, Grude's projects tend to be both political and philosophical, they deal with themes like animal rights, human rights, protection of the indigenous peoples, environmental protection, spirituality and sexuality.

With more than 250 awards, titles with Grude's involvement include Mogadishu Soldier, The Mole -undercover in North-Korea, 'Til Kingdom Come, The Secret Lives of Pigs, Inside Fur, Cold Case Hammarskjöld, Raghu Rai – An unfmed portrait, The

Magnitsky Act – Behind the Scenes, Forever Pure, Digital Dissidents, Snow Monkey, The Act of Killing, The Look of Silence, Love City Jalalabad, Gulabi Gang, Back to the Square, Pirate Bay AFK, Farewell Comrades! TV-series, Dance of Outlaws, Pushwagner, Russian Lessons, Yodok Stories, Belarusian Waltz and On a Tightrope.

JOELLE ALEXIS, SENIOR CONSULTING EDITOR

Born in Belgium, Joelle Alexis is an International Award-Winning editor, based in Tel Aviv. She has been working on feature length documentaries and fiction films for over 25 years. Her films are traveling around the globe at Cannes, Berlin, Venice, San Sebastian, IDFA, Hotdocs, Nyon, Sundance, Toronto and many other film festivals.

Amongst numerous documentaries she lately worked on is *Speer Goes to Hollywood*, a film by Vanessa Lapa ("The Decent One") selected at Berlinale Special 2020.

Joelle is the recipient of The Best Editing Award at Sundance Film festival for *A Film Un Finished* (2012), The Champagne Spy Special Jury Award for Best Editing at RiverRun IFF, 4 times Best Editor at the Israeli Documentary Film Forum, and Best Editing Award for "Leftover Women" (Arte, Tribeca 2018) at Doc Aviv 2019.

Some of her Award Winning Films are 'Get, The Trial of Vivian Amsalem' Cannes 2014, Nominated for the Golden Globe for Best Foreign Language Film, *Twilight of a Life*, Opening film at Vision Du reel, *The Green Prince*, Audience Award at Sundance 2015, to name a few.



WALTERI VANHANEN, EDITOR



A Finnish Film Editor born in 1990. He began by producing and editing commercials and music videos, and directed two short documentaries *Riding Waves of Winter Gloom & Dog Days*. In 2015 he moved to Copenhagen to join Final Cut for Real and worked there as an assistant editor on several films, including Oscar nominated *Strong Island*, and *FLEE* which premiered at Sundance 2021. In 2017 Walteri, together with Janus Billeskov Jansen, edited his first feature length documentary *Angels Are Made of Light*, which premiered at TIFF. In 2019 Walteri moved to London for a Master's degree in film editing at The National Film and Television School. He graduated in 2021 and works on fiction, documentary and animated films.

INA FICHMAN, EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

For more than twenty-five years, Ina Fichman, Intuitive Pictures, has been producing award-winning documentary and fiction films, and interactive projects. Many of her creative documentaries have been released in theatres in Canada and abroad and have played at festivals including Sundance, Berlin, Hot Docs, RIDM, CPHDOX, Venice, SXSW, Tribeca, TIFF and others. Award-winning productions include Amer Shomali's *THE WANTED 18*, *MONSOON* (Canada's Top 10) and *VITA ACTIVA: THE SPIRIT OF HANNAH ARENDT*. Recent productions include *STRAY*, *THE GIG IS UP*, *ONCE UPON A SEA*, *BLUE BOX*, *THE OSLO DIARIES*, *INSIDE LEHMAN BROTHERS*, *GIFT* and *LAILA AT THE BRIDGE*. In 2018, Ina was the recipient of the Don Haig Award from Hot Docs which recognizes the work of a Canadian independent producer. She is currently chair of the national board of the Documentary Association of Canada, is one of the chairs of the Documentary Producers Alliance (DPA) and also sits on the Board of the Canadian producers association, CMPA. Ina is a member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.



PARTNERS

REVOLVER



hinterland



institute of
documentary
film

hotdocsforum



AMERICAN
FILM
SHOWCASE

HBOMAX



idfa
Bertha
Fund



Intuitive
Pictures

FILMKRAFT
FILMSENTERET | ROGALAND

MEDIEFONDET
zefyr

FRITT ORD



RTS
Radio Télévision
Suisse



VG TV

eO docs

ZDF

arte

yle

NRCS



AUTLOOK
FILMSALES