

Nastya

By Ilia Donskykh



MOSCOW, Jan. 23 (Novaya Gazeta)—Nastya Baburova rang me sometime in mid-October last year. “Can I come to the paper to work?”

“Of course. What’s up? Did they sack you?”

“No, it’s just I want to be somewhere you can write normally...”

It was then that we began to hear about the new Tesak case and the trial of the Ryno-Skachevsky band, which targeted foreigners and migrant workers, was just beginning, on 2 December they were found guilty of 20 murders.

So Nastya’s appearance was heaven-sent. She already knew the subject perfectly. Without exaggeration I can say that there are few people in all Russia who knew as much about our neo-Nazis, our anti-fascist movement and youth organizations, as she did. It was not, perhaps, so much a matter of knowledge and skills either.

The majority of Russia’s professional journalists would have reacted dismissively: fascists, anti-fascists—don’t we have enough crazy people already? But Nastya

realized that we must discuss and cover such themes.

Anastasia Baburova was in the year ahead of me at the *Moscow University* faculty of journalism. Nastya was also older than her classmates, however. She had come to Moscow from Sebastopol in the Crimea and first got a place at the prestigious *Moscow Institute for International Relations*. Soon she decided, however, that her future did not lie in diplomacy and transferred to us.



Nastya studied for four and a half years at the university’s journalism faculty. And that speaks well of our teachers.

I won’t describe how we felt on Monday: students, journalists and all of us. “It can’t be true”, “it’s impossible” were words repeated again and again in half-hearted conversations. Probably this is the most terrible event I can recall. Because there’s no one to answer the questions—Why? What for? We are the ones who must find the answers.

Our last conversation was shortly before the New Year. *Novaya Gazeta* had already closed for the vacation period and everyone was getting ready for the holidays: New Year, Christmas.

“Hi. I’ve got an article here. It’s very short.”

“Nastya, nobody’s at work now. It’s vacation time.”

“I understand that but someone must read it. It can’t wait.”

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