
International Intelligence

Russian Elites Celebrate FDR's 125th Anniversary

Viewers of Russia's First Channel TV news on the evening of Feb. 8 saw President Franklin Roosevelt looking at them from the screen, as the biggest Russian national TV network joined in plentiful media coverage of a Moscow conference, "The Lessons of the New Deal for Today's Russia and the Whole World"

Held at the Foreign Ministry-linked Moscow State Institute for Foreign Relations (MGIMO), the event commemorated the 125th anniversary of FDR's birth, Jan. 30. In attendance were top representatives of Russian political and academic institutions, including Kremlin Deputy Chief of Staff Vladislav Surkov, State Duma Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Konstantin Kosachyov, Academician Sergei Rogov of the U.S.A.-Canada Institute, Academician Andrei Kokoshin (also a Duma committee chairman), Grigori Tomchin from former Prime Minister Yevgeni Primakov's Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and Boris Titov of the Business Russia association. U.S. Ambassador William Burns was also present.

The most sensational presentation was that of Surkov, who strove to link his own "sovereign democracy" concept for Russia, with Roosevelt's ideas. He tried to draw a parallel between FDR and President Vladimir Putin (nobody could miss the hint about Presidents who serve third, and fourth terms). Said Surkov, "Like Roosevelt in his time, Putin today is forced to, is obliged to strengthen administrative management, and make the greatest possible use of the power of the Presidency, to overcome a crisis." Putin's aide recalled that FDR took office at a time when people felt hopeless, and "the press and the financial sector were almost totally controlled by oligarchical groups."

"History does not repeat itself," Surkov went on, "but Russia seeks freedom from want and from fear, and there are leaders and societies that inspire us, and Franklin Roosevelt and America and among them. . . ."

"While, in the 20th Century, he was our military advisor, in the 21st, he is becoming

our ideological ally. For the majority of Russians, Roosevelt remains the greatest of the great Americans."

'National Mexico Mission, Not Neoliberal System'

Mexico's Constitutional principles are more relevant than ever, because they are the best defense against an "unjust, neoliberal, and globalized system." On the eve of the 90th anniversary of the Mexican Constitution of 1917, PRI party deputy Adolfo Ríos Camarena made that point, as he noted how the PAN party is trying to open up the energy sector (Pemex, CFE) to foreign private investment. Mexico must find "its own national mission," he said, "and not be an instrument of policies that come from abroad."

PRD party deputy Raymundo Cárdenas, president of the Commission on Constitutional Matters in the Lower House, warned that the Calderón government is "violating the Constitution," making an end run around Article 27 to allow private investment in the energy sector.

First English 'Phaedon' Translation in 218 Years

Schiller Institute member Pat Noble has completed the first English translation of Moses Mendelssohn's *Phaedon* in 218 years. The translation of Mendelssohn's *Phaedon, or On the Immortality of the Soul* was published in January by Peter Lang publishers, and is available for purchase at www.peterlang.com.

Mendelssohn was the leader of Germany's Jewish Renaissance, and was known as "the Socrates of Berlin." His decision to treat Plato's "Phaedo" dialogue (about Socrates' last day on Earth) in terms of Gottfried Leibniz's epistemological breakthroughs, was key to the revival of cultural optimism, and to the mobilization for the American Revolution. Mendelssohn's 1767 work broke the vicious and cynical ideology of Voltaire, the poison infecting the Prussian

King, Frederick the Great, that had allowed Britain's Venetian party to build its empire on his back during the Seven Years' War.

English readers have been hampered by the only extant translation of this work, that by Charles Cullen in 1789, which was at best an incompetent translation—and at worst, a deliberate distortion perpetrated by British Prime Minister William Pitt.

Noble's translation hearkens much closer to the Mendelssohn/Lessing project of making deep ideas broadly accessible, without dumbing down the ideas or images.

The work includes fellow Schiller Institute member David Shavin's introduction, a study on Mendelssohn as the Martin Luther King of Europe, before and during the American Revolution.

European Rail Workers: 'Stop Privatization'

Rail workers from across Europe protested in Paris on Feb. 8 against European Union directives that will force the privatization of railways throughout the economic bloc. A delegation from the British rail workers union RMT took the message to Paris that the privatization of Britain's railways a decade ago should stand as a stark warning, that forcing the same bitter medicine on railways elsewhere in Europe promises to bring chaos, misery, and disaster to rail workers and commuters.

"It is beyond belief that the unelected commissioners in Brussels should want to impose rail privatisation throughout the EU in the light of the ten years of misery that the break-up and sell-off of Britain's railways have brought," RMT general secretary Bob Crow said.

"Our experience tells us that that will mean millions in taxpayers' and fare-payers' money being siphoned out of the industry by greedy privateers, that fares will rise, services will worsen, staffing levels will be pared to the bone and, worst of all, that safety will be fatally undermined. Today's demonstration is a reflection of the growing opposition to the drive to privatise Europe's railways."