

Vertical of power

Nikita Mikhalkov is known outside of Russia - if at all - for his 1994 Oscar-winning film "Burnt by the Sun," in which he condemned the Stalin Terror that Vladimir Putin has since relativized. Mikhalkov is a self-confessed monarchist, and more insight into modern Russia - and the director's soul - can be gained from his 1998 film "Barber of Siberia," in which he plays Alexander III. It was Alexander III who said that Russia has only two true allies, its army and its navy. For lack of a czar, Mikhalkov looks today to Putin, for whom oil and gas are Russia's "army and navy." Mikhalkov didn't want Putin to step down as president when his term expired, and he has adopted Putin's vertical-of-power style in running the Russian Film Union. When the members voted to expel Mikhalkov as president, he declared the session invalid and reinstalled himself in the position. Question: By honoring Mikhalkov at the upcoming Karlovy Vary Film Festival, are the organizers and sponsors making an artistic, political or commercial statement?



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