

Pro-Kremlin Russian Filmmaker Nikita Mikhalkov Selected for Oscars

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Russia's Oscar committee has put forward a movie by pro-Kremlin film director Nikita Mikhalkov to compete in the Academy Awards' foreign-language film category.

Mikhalkov's film “Solnechny Udar,” or “Sunstroke,” was chosen Monday to represent Russia at the Academy Awards in February, the TASS news agency reported, citing the committee's head Vladimir Menshov.

“Sunstroke” is based on an eponymous short story and the “Cursed Days” memoirs written by Nobel laureate Ivan Bunin. The film recounts a love tale set in post-revolutionary Crimea — the peninsula that was annexed from Ukraine by Russia last year.

The \$21 million film, which premiered in Russia in October last year, grossed just shy of \$1.7 million in Russia, according to KinoPoisk, and has received mixed reviews.

The film last year won Russia's top Golden Eagle film prize — a victory considered controversial because Mikhalkov himself founded the award, Gazeta.ru reported.

But Mikhalkov, a staunch defender of President Vladimir Putin whose work enjoys generous state funding, was less confident of his chances at the Oscars.

“I personally don't see any [chances of winning] in the current situation,” Mikhalkov said, TASS reported. “I just experience huge satisfaction and joy knowing my colleagues at the Oscar Academy will have to watch my film. Maybe one of them will be moved by it,” he said.

Mikhalkov is the last Russian director to have won an Oscar in the foreign-language category with his film “Burnt by the Sun” in 1995.

“A second [Oscar] would not be bad, but I'm afraid people wouldn't stand it,” the director joked following Monday's nomination, news website Lenta.ru reported.

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