

In Memory of Academician Mikhail Titarenko, Visionary of Eurasian Cooperation

by Rachel Douglas, March 9, 2016



Mikhail Titarenko 1935-2016. Photo: [IFES RAS](#)

A man passed away on 25 February 2016, whose name the reader likely has never heard, although he changed your life. Academician Mikhail Titarenko, who died at the age of 81 after a lengthy illness, headed the Institute of Far Eastern Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences (IFES RAS) from 1985 until last year. Schiller Institute founder Helga Zepp-LaRouche wrote in a message of condolence to the late academician's colleagues, "If the world will be pulled back from the abyss and a new paradigm will bring about a new chapter in human history, it will be thanks to the strategic alliance between Russia and China, and Mikhail Titarenko has probably contributed more than anyone else for it to come into being." Titarenko was, Zepp-LaRouche continued, "the perfect example, of why the study and knowledge of other cultures is the basis for peace." He was one of the foremost intellectual authors of what has become the Eurasian

development perspective of the New Silk Road, the Eurasian Land-bridge, and BRICS (the Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa group of countries).

Academician Titarenko became one of Russia's leading Sinologists during years when Chinese-Russian relations were rocky, to say the least. As a young graduate of Moscow State University in philosophy, he went in 1957 to study for two years at Beijing University, earning qualifications in Chinese language and philosophy. He studied not only socialist teachings, but also philosophy as taught by scholars of an older generation, such as Feng Lu-yan (1895-1990), who had reintroduced the study of all schools of ancient Chinese thought, and, in particular, the "neo-Confucianism" of various subsequent historical periods.

Following his studies, Titarenko's career coincided with the Sino-Soviet split, beginning in 1960. Despite intense economic cooperation in the 1950s, relations between the two countries deteriorated to the point of armed clashes on the Ussuri River in 1969. During these years, Titarenko was in the diplomatic service at the Soviet Consulate in Shanghai (1961-62) and the Embassy in Beijing (1963-65). He then worked for 20 years as a China expert at the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, all the while pursuing his studies of China and earning advanced degrees. He later supervised the production of a Russian encyclopedic dictionary of Chinese philosophy, and the five-volume *Encyclopedia of the Spiritual and Intellectual Culture of China*. In one of his last writings, the 2014 book *Russia and China: Strategic Partnership and the Challenges of Today*, Academician Titarenko termed the Russia-China strategic partnership in the 21st century "a tectonic shift" in the world.

The Strategic Triangle

Titarenko assumed leadership of the IFES RAS in 1985, on the eve of the beginnings of a turnaround in Chinese-Russian Relations. Though Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachov visited Beijing in 1989 and met with Chinese leader Deng Xiao-ping, ending three decades of hostility, diplomatic contacts between the countries were sporadic in the 1990s after the collapse of the Soviet Union. A visit to Russia by then-President Jiang Zemin in 1998 served as a keynote for coming changes. Arriving three months after the August 1998 financial crash in Russia, Jiang not only visited Moscow, but stopped at the science center of Akademgorodok in Novosibirsk. There Jiang spoke to the real Russia, pointing to Russian prowess in science and technology as a "shining beacon" of the "inexhaustible" human wisdom that makes possible the progress of mankind.

One month later, Russian Prime Minister Yevgeni Primakov, visiting New Delhi, announced his initiative for the formation of a Russia-India-China "strategic triangle" in Eurasia. This step opened the door to greatly intensified bilateral and trilateral diplomacy among the great powers of the Eurasian continent, and to the formalization of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in 2001 and, ultimately, of BRICS. As the 2014 *EIR* Special Report *The New Silk Road Becomes the World Land-Bridge* put it, the collaboration of the Eurasian powers, proposed by Primakov, "came to life through a

years-long sequence of three-way academic and diplomatic meetings; after many turns in the road, the ‘RIC’ combination today is the core of the alliance called the BRICS.”

Pages and pages of condolence messages on the IFES RAS website, in Chinese, English and Russian, make clear that Mikhail Titarenko was a prime mover of this process. They can be read here: <http://www.ifes-ras.ru/component/content/article/1-world/1719-condolence>. Perusing these messages from prominent scholars around the world provides a unique window into current history.

Prof. Manoranjan Mohanty of the Indian Institute of Chinese Studies wrote to the acting director of the IFES RAS, Dr. Sergei Luzyanin, “The birth of the RIC (Russia-India-China) academic forum largely was the outcome of Professor Titarenko’s initiative. It was he who had proposed the idea of cooperation among scholars and governments of India, China and Russia in 1998 to the Institute of Chinese Studies, after which we took it up with the Chinese scholars who warmly responded to the proposal. That academic forum had inspired the meeting of the Foreign Ministers of RIC, leading to many high-level initiatives. On its efforts today BRICS has emerged as a globally significant force, playing a major role in restructuring of the international political economy. The RIC Academic Forum continues to meet alternately in the three countries, taking up crucial matters of peace, security and sustainable development. Having closely worked with Academician Titarenko on this multilateral initiative, I particularly remember his contribution to this process, his research-based writing on the subject and critical interventions on policy issues, his vision for creating a just and equitable world, in the making of which our three countries can play a significant role.”

There are scores of such tributes on the IFES RAS site, from Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and the Russian Ambassadors to China and India; from dozens of Chinese government officials and university scholars, the Chinese-Russian Friendship Society, China’s national Anti-Terrorism Committee, and leading Chinese publications; from Korea, Vietnam, more from India, from institutes of the RAS and regional Russian universities, and a handful of American and European scholars. Ambassador A.M. Kadakin, currently representing Russia in India, called Titarenko a “wise mentor” to several generations of Russian diplomats. Patriarch Kirill and Metropolitan Hilarion of the Russian Orthodox Church hailed his work on promoting the study of China’s ancient culture in Russia, developing Chinese-Russian relations, and helping to revive the Orthodox Church in China, where it had a historical presence especially in the northeast.

My colleague Ramtanu Maitra of *EIR* wrote to the IFES that he “had the good fortune of meeting [Academician Titarenko] once in New Delhi in late 1990s after Prime Minister Primakov had initiated the concept of developing the Russia-China-India triangle to stabilize the world in the post-Cold War days. Academician Titarenko was speaking at a conference which I, along with a few Indian friends, some of whom he knew, attended. On the side, discussing the world affairs, I was impressed not only about his understanding of the region, but his sincere goodwill about us all. I found him a man of great integrity, deeply opposed to geopolitics and conflicts.”

Academician Titarenko's acquaintance with the Schiller Institute and Helga Zepp-LaRouche's campaign for the Eurasian Land-Bridge dates back to the mid-1990s, when his IFES colleagues were inspired by and publicized the Eurasian Land-Bridge concept and map, published in the *EIR* Special Report *The Eurasian Land-Bridge: The "New Silk Road"—Locomotive for Worldwide Economic Development*. That report contained Zepp-LaRouche's address to the May 1996 Beijing International Symposium on Economic Development of the Regions along the New Euro-Asia Continental Bridge. In 1998, both she and Titarenko took part in the mobile Beijing International Symposium on Economic Development of the Regions along the New Euro-Asia Continental Bridge, in which, as participant Mary Burdman reported in *EIR* at the time, delegates from eight nations toured four Chinese cities to inspect the actual conditions in the land-bridge region, and discuss its future development with national and regional Chinese leaders.

Titarenko fought for many years to overcome the prejudice of some in Russia, who believed that Chinese continental bridge routes would be developed to the detriment of Russia's Trans-Siberian Railway. In 2011 he welcomed "Chinese interest in creating a transcontinental transport corridor from Southeast Asia to Europe through Russia." While noting that "China recognizes this corridor through Russia, and is even offering certain efforts to develop this project," Titarenko admonished Russian officials that the corridor would function only if Russia's own railways, including the Trans-Sib, were drastically modernized to handle fast container shipping.

The meeting of minds between Academician Titarenko and the Schiller Institute is well expressed by his 30th anniversary greeting to the institute in October 2014, and Zepp-LaRouche's condolence letter to Prof. Luzyanin.

Titarenko's 2014 message to the Schiller Institute's 30th anniversary

Dear Professor [Lyndon] LaRouche, Dear Helga:

On the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the Schiller Institute, please accept congratulations and best wishes from me personally, as well as from the many scholars at our Russian Academy of Sciences Institute of Far East Studies who know your work and activity.

For many years, you and your Institute have been doing exceptionally important work to shape a new international economic order and improve the world climate. The projects of the Schiller Institute—particularly those related to the Economic Belt of the Great Silk Road, the railway bridge in Eurasia, and the rehabilitation of the world financial system—are testimony to your profound insight, scientific honesty, and genuine civic and human courage.

In these current difficult times, we wish the Schiller Institute success in bringing your initiatives to fruition, as well as even more widespread recognition. To you

personally, and all your colleagues: good health, redoubled creative energy, spiritual and intellectual well-being, and complete happiness!

Helga Zepp-LaRouche's letter of condolences for the death of Mikhail Titarenko

Dear Professor Luzyanin,

From myself, my husband Lyndon LaRouche and in the name of the international Schiller Institute, I would like to extend to you and all your colleagues at the Russian Academy of Sciences Institute of Far Eastern Studies deepest condolences on the death of Academician Mikhail Titarenko.

I have been privileged to know Academician Titarenko personally and to see him act as one of the intellectual fathers and most energetic organizers of the prospect of productive collaboration between Russia and China on the project of the New Silk Road and the Eurasian Land-bridge. Today, the development of that cooperation, with its further extension through the "strategic triangle" China-India-Russia and then BRICS, gives mankind hope for a new, optimistic era of civilization, despite the tremendous danger of a new world war and economic collapse. If the world will be pulled back from the abyss and a new paradigm will bring about a new chapter in human history, it will be thanks to the strategic alliance between Russia and China, and Mikhail Titarenko has probably contributed more than anyone else for it to come into being.

During our 1998 "travel symposium" on the Eurasian Land-bridge, in which I had the honor and pleasure to participate with Academician Titarenko and Academician Dmitri Lvov, when we visited Beijing, Nanjing, Lianyungang and Qinhuangdao, I came to appreciate what a powerful gift Mikhail Titarenko was giving to his own country and the world, by using his profound knowledge of China to promote Chinese-Russian cooperation and build support for the Eurasian development perspective. He is the perfect example, of why the study and knowledge of other cultures is the basis for peace. This journey will remain one of the outstanding memories of my life.

You have my best wishes for success in carrying forward the great work of Academician Titarenko. Please convey our deep sympathy to his family.

IN MEMORIAM