

Momentum Gathering in Europe Behind Human Rights in Russia

By Robert Amsterdam

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I apologize for my relative absence from the blog over the past couple of days. I have just come to the end of an extremely busy week in Europe, where there has been a noticeable groundswell of support on several of the issues I advocate for in Russia.

In Germany on Wednesday, I appeared on ZDF Morgenmagazin and had the opportunity to meet with various political stakeholders to discuss Russia affairs and the Khodorkovsky case. In France, lots of attention is shifting toward Moscow as well, after the publication in *Le Monde* of what I think is one of the more important articles about this case. André Glucksmann, a French philosopher and frequent political commentator, wrote an impassioned plea entitled "Sakharov-Khodorkovsky: Same Cause" which comments on the media, political, and economic verticals of power that Khodorkovsky challenged and human rights in general. The article is causing quite a furor among commentators here, which has led to additional coverage and commentary in *Le Figaro* and other newspapers.

Glucksmann writes: "When threatened, Mikhail Khodorkovsky did not flee. He chose to defend himself in Russia. We underestimate this figure and the importance that he can have in his country. To understand, one should refer to Sakharov. I remember the remark Elena Bonner, his widow and my friend, made about a meeting in the Kremlin where the most powerful oligarchs were assembled around Putin: "When Khodorkovsky appeared, I thought that this one is too intelligent and too relaxed, courageous and reckless, and he's going to pay for it.""

There is also movement on other fronts here. For the fourth anniversary of Khodorkovsky's arrest, there has been a considerable amount of interest from European media and commentators. The judgment against Russia from the European Court of Human Rights in the Platon Lebedev case have also generated significant attention.

I suppose when people read that Khodorkovsky's parole is being denied on the basis of some bizarre technicality like not putting his arms in the right position following a walk, it becomes more and more difficult to believe the government's claim that he isn't being politically persecuted or treated unfairly.

There remains much work to do, but this is one of those weeks where it seems to me that people are beginning to get it, and that momentum is building in Europe behind human rights.