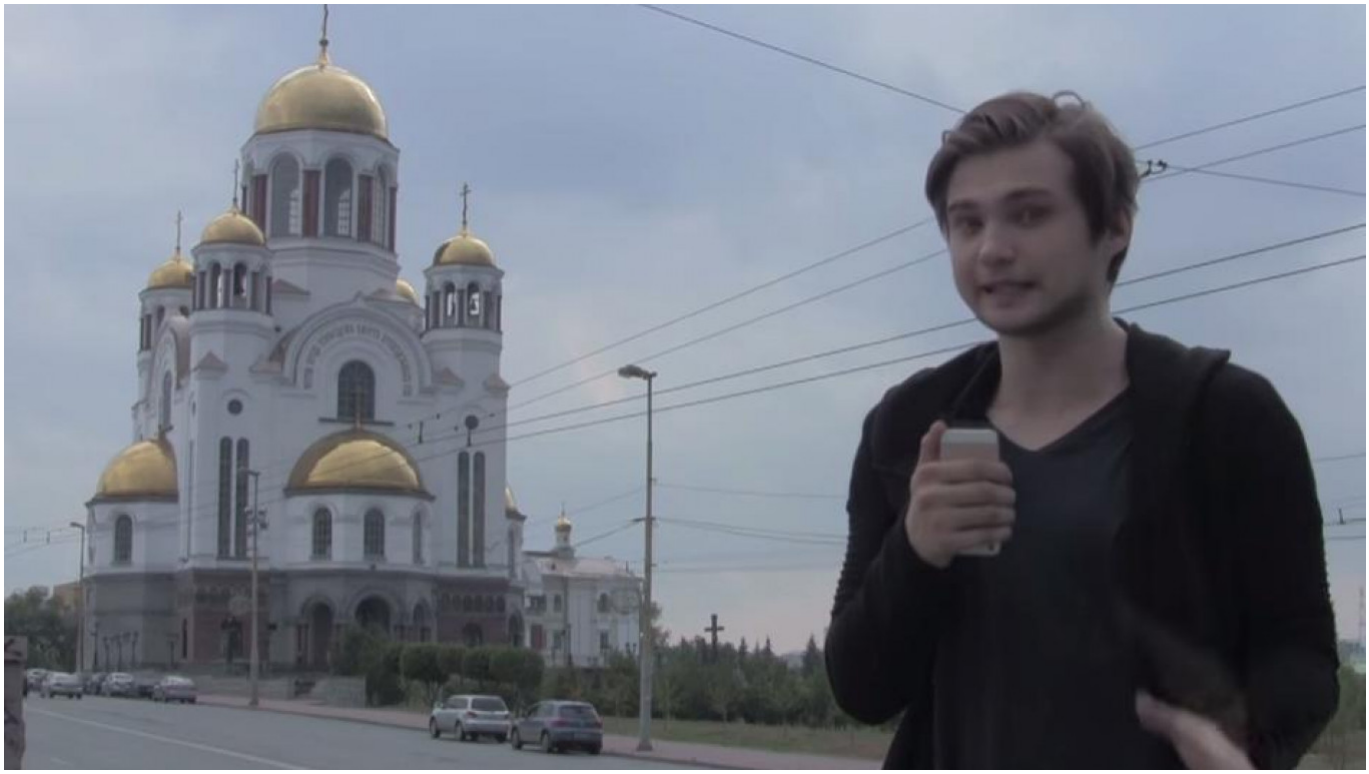
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30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russian Blogger on Trial for Playing Pokemon Go in a Cathedral

March 13, 2017



Ruslan Sokolovsky **Ruslan Sokolovsky / YouTube**

The trial of blogger Ruslan Sokolovsky,▣accused of extremism and offending religious believers for playing▣Pokemon Go in a cathedral, began in the Ural city of▣Yekateinburg on Monday.

Sokolovsky was arrested for a series of▣videos he uploaded to YouTube in August 2016, which the police deem▣"extremist" and "offensive to religious believers' feelings."▣He faces a maximum sentence of seven and a half years in prison.

The 21 year-old blogger's most infamous▣video, which turned him into an online celebrity in Russia, shows him▣entering the Church of All Saints in Yekaterinburg and playing▣Pokemon Go on his iPhone. Sokolovsky later added▣narration to the video which police describe as illegal and "obscene." In a short speech at the beginning of the video,▣Sokolovsky rejects warnings reported in the Russian press that▣playing Pokemon Go in churches could result in a prison sentence.

Sokolovsky says that he does not intend to apologize or ask for forgiveness from the Russian Orthodox Church for his videos.

“The Russian Orthodox Church is asking for a public repentance. I don't see why I should repent in front of an organization I do not like,” he told journalists after the court hearing.

Instead, he said he would be “interested” if the church sent him to work for one of their charities as a form of punishment. “I would accept such a form of repentance because I would be helping specific people and not the Church,” he said.

The young blogger also added that he sees how some of his videos could have offended believers. “If I offended anyone, I am ready to apologize to specific people,” he said.

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