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Van With Explosives Crashes Into Cinema to Protest Tsar Biopic

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Yekaterinburg Entertainment Complex "Kosmos" **Emergency Situations Ministry Press Service**

A man rammed a vehicle rigged with gas canisters into a movie theater and concert hall in Yekaterinburg early on Monday, to oppose a new film depicting Tsar Nicholas' love affair, the E1 local media reported.

Footage of the incident showed the driver stepping out of a UAZ off-road van at the entrance to the Kosmos entertainment center before triggering an explosion.

Embed:

Emergency services said they put out the flames within 30 minutes and rescued five people from the second floor of the building.

Regional police said in an online statement that it apprehended a man in his late 30s suspected of the attack on Kosmos after he sought medical assistance.

A source close to the investigation told the Znak.com news outlet that Denis Murashov, 39, claimed during an interrogation that he carried out the attack to prevent the screening of Alexei Uchitel's "Mathilde." The film, due for release in late October, depicts Tsar Nicholas' love affair with ballet dancer Mathilde Kschessinska.

The attack on the Kosmos center took place two days after it hosted the Ural Open Festival of Russian Cinema. More than 20 screenings had been scheduled for Monday, Sept. 4., according to the festival's website.

Kosmos announced on its website that all film screenings would be postponed until Sept. 7, while concerts would go ahead as scheduled.

Yekaterinburg Mayor Yevgeny Roizman labeled the incident an act of "terrorism."

Related article: 'Mathilde' Film Director's Studio Attacked With Molotov Cocktails

Filmmaker Alexei Uchitel's St. Petersburg studio was attacked with Molotov cocktails in the early hours of last Thursday. Uchitel accused the authorities at the time of ignoring repeated calls to take action in response to the intimidation.

A religious vigilante group warned cinema managers early this year that "cinemas would burn" if "Mathilde" was shown. The most high-profile critic of the biopic among Orthodox activists is State Duma Deputy Natalia Poklonskaya.

Poklonskaya and Orthodox activists have described the film as offensive to religious believers.

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