

Russia's Culture Minister Outraged by Success of J.K. Rowling's 'Fantastic Beasts' Blockbuster

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Vladimir Medinsky (Andrei Nikerichev / Moskva News Agency)

Russia's Culture Minister Vladimir Medinsky has expressed outrage over the success of the "Fantastic Beasts" blockbuster film at the Russian box office last month, citing it as an example of the threat posed by Hollywood to the domestic film industry.

Russia became Europe's biggest cinema market last year after overtaking France in ticket sales, with more than 212 million tickets sold for a total of 53.2 billion rubles (\$852 million) in 2017. Meanwhile, the country's cinema market has been rocked by incidents of state interference over the past year as the culture ministry seeks to boost ticket sales for domestic productions by revoking and rescheduling screenings of foreign films.

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Medinsky on Monday called to ramp up state protectionism efforts in order to save the domestic film industry from the “global machine that is Hollywood.”

“I am glad that these ideas [to strengthen state protectionism] have finally reached the cinematographic community,” Medinsky was cited as saying by the state-run RIA Novosti news agency on Monday, hours after Karen Shakhnazarov, the head of Russia's largest production studio Mosfilm, called to limit the screenings of American films in Russia.

The culture minister went on to say that he was “outraged” to find that the foreign film “Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald,” written and co-produced by renowned British author J.K. Rowling, had been given over 70 percent of screen time in Russian cinemas on certain days in November.

“What is this, if not the total monopoly of Hollywood film distributors, who impose their conditions on cinema chains?” he quipped.

Medinsky, who is known for his outspoken conservative views, concluded that it is necessary “to increase the subsidies [allocated to Russian films] or increase protectionist policies” to ensure that domestic film productions make it to the nation's screens.

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