

Russia Arrests Disabled 'Soviet Citizen' Suspected of Plotting Coup

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Thousands of people across Russia believe that the U.S.S.R. did not legally cease to exist three decades ago. **Sophia Sandurskaya / Moskva News Agency**

A disabled Russian pensioner who denies the collapse of the Soviet Union is suspected by the authorities of plotting to overthrow the government, according to the local chapter of the organization that believes the U.S.S.R. still legally exists.

Vladimir Beskhlebnyi, 72, was placed under house arrest in the Omsk region Saturday on charges of creating an extremist group and plotting a criminal act, the Soviet Citizens group to which he belongs [said](#). The charges carry a prison sentence of up to 10 years.

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Beskhlebnyi is among [thousands](#) of self-declared Soviet citizens who believe that the Soviet Union did not legally cease to exist three decades ago.

“He walks with a cane after getting in a car accident several years ago. Don’t our own agencies find it absurd to suspect him of seizing power?” one of Beskhlebnyi’s supporters Vladimir Zhigalin [told](#) the independent Novaya Gazeta newspaper Tuesday.

Authorities suspect Zhigalin of “coordinating” an extremist organization in a remote Siberian village, the newspaper reported.

“We're peaceful people and not the opposition, just adherents of the U.S.S.R.,” Larisa Khrustskaya, another supporter, said.

Zhigalin and Khrustakaya were among five Beskhlebnyi associates who were subjected to raids by armed and masked Federal Security Service (FSB) agents around the time of his detention.

The agents handed Beskhlebnyi’s wife a search warrant, according to Novaya Gazeta, claiming that her husband was plotting an “armed seizure of power.” They confiscated his personal belongings, including a Soviet passport that he never traded for a Russian ID.

Since 2018, Russian authorities have [charged several high-profile figures](#) in the movement denying the Soviet collapse. None of the charges are believed to have resulted in convictions.

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