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Yekaterinburg Court Jails 5 Leftist Activists Over Alleged Coup Attempt

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Five members of the leftist discussion club appear in court on Dec. 16, 2025. **Screenshot Mediazona / Telegram**

A military court in the city of Yekaterinburg sentenced five self-described Marxists from the neighboring republic of Bashkortostan to lengthy prison terms on terrorism and attempted coup charges, the exiled news outlet Mediazona reported Tuesday.

The middle-aged and elderly men, who were all members of a leftist discussion club, were arrested in the Bashkortostan capital of Ufa in March 2022, a month after Russia launched the full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Authorities accused them of plotting to violently overthrow the government and establish a "Soviet government." The men denied the allegations, arguing that they had held theoretical conversations about waging revolution but did not intend to incite real violence.

A panel of three judges from the Central District Military Court found the five men guilty of forming a "terrorist group" and plotting a coup d'état.

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The defendants on Tuesday received sentences ranging from 16 years to 22 years in maximum-security prison, bringing an end to court proceedings that began in December 2023. Prosecutors had requested prison sentences ranging between 20 and 24 years.

In court, the men chanted "fascists" after a judge read out the verdicts. They had called the case against them "a silent execution" and "repression against communists" in their final statements earlier this month.

Among those convicted is 43-year-old ENT doctor Alexei Dmitriev, who founded the leftist discussion group in 2016. Dmitriev and Dmitry Chuvilin, a 41-year-old former member of Bashkortostan's legislative assembly, were both sentenced to 20 years in prison.

The others include 66-year-old retiree Yury Yefimov, 40-year-old activist Rinat Burkeyev, as well as 49-year-old Pavel Matisov, who had served alongside pro-Kremlin rebels in eastern Ukraine after fighting broke out in 2014.

The key witness against the group was Sergei Sapozhnikov, a naturalized Russian citizen who had also fought for pro-Kremlin rebels in eastern Ukraine and who joined the Marxist activists before turning against them.

The defendants accused Sapozhnikov of fabricating his testimony in court.

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