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Russian Philosopher Reportedly Charged With Embezzling Public Funds Intended for Aristotle Translations

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The Institute of Philosophy of the Russian Academy of Sciences. **Niklitov (CC BY-SA 4.0)**

Russian law enforcement authorities have charged a senior academic with embezzling millions of rubles intended for a project to translate the works of Aristotle, the newspaper Kommersant reported Thursday, citing a source familiar with the matter.

Svetlana Mesyats was detained and placed under house arrest last week following police raids at the Russian Academy of Sciences' Institute of Philosophy and the homes of several of its employees. At least 10 people were reportedly questioned, including the institute's 87-year-old acting director.

According to Kommersant, Mesyats, an employee of the institute, was accused of embezzling 16 million rubles ($226,000) in public funding by allegedly falsifying progress reports for the project "The Heritage of Aristotle," a multi-year academic initiative that she headed.

Investigators claim that those working on the project pocketed the grant money without delivering the finalized texts, which include translations of previously unpublished ancient treatises.

Mesyats, who holds a PhD equivalent in philosophy, has reportedly denied the allegations. If convicted of large-scale fraud, she faces up to 10 years in prison.

The independent science news outlet T-Invariant reported that the case is connected to a long-running feud over the leadership and ideological direction of the Institute of Philosophy.

In 2021, right-wing conservative philosopher Alexander Dugin and Orthodox billionaire Konstantin Malofeyev pushed through the controversial appointment of an acting director who lost the post two weeks later.

Malofeyev's Russian Orthodox TV channel Tsargrad has since disparaged the institute as a "center for Russia's destruction."

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