

Orthodox Church Battles 'Mathilde' Biopic With Family-Values Billboards

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The Russian Orthodox Church is countering the upcoming release of a film about the last Tsar's love affair with billboards promoting family values, the Interfax news agency [reports](#).

Director Alexei Uchitel's "Mathilde," which depicts Tsar Nicholas II's romantic relationship with a Polish ballerina, is slated for release next month. The Church has [called](#) the biopic an "obvious lie."

The Church's Synodal Information Department said late on Tuesday that the billboards throughout Moscow, which quote from letters between the Tsar and his wife, seek to spread the truth about the tsarist Romanov family.

Nicholas' and his wife Alexandra's private life "has remained a target for myths and speculation" for over a century, the department said as cited by the Interfax news agency.

“Meanwhile, the real history of their married life based on faith, love and mutual respect can serve as a model of family relations for our contemporaries.”

The Orthodox Church canonized Nicholas II and his family, who were killed by the Bolsheviks a year after the 1917 revolution, as “passion bearers” in 2000.

Even before its release, Uchitel’s “Mathilde” has [sparked tensions](#) between Orthodox believers and the arts establishment, as well as government officials including the culture minister.

Related article: [Russian Culture Minister Slams 'Hysteria' Over Tsar Biopic 'Mathilde'](#)

State Duma Deputy Natalya Poklonskaya has led the charge against the biopic, calling the affair a fabrication. A vigilante group called Christian State - Holy Rus warned that “cinemas would burn, maybe people will even suffer” in [letters](#) to dozens of cinema managers.

Russia’s leading cinema chain has pulled the screening of “Mathilde” over frequent threats to theaters. Last week authorities [detained](#) suspects, including the Christian State - Holy Rus leader, following arson attacks in Moscow and St. Petersburg seen as attempts to threaten the film’s release.

The Orthodox Church’s billboard project is dubbed “Nikolai II and Alexandra Fyodorovna. Words About Love.”

Its Synodal Information Department estimated that around 300 stands have been placed across Moscow.

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