

Famed Russian Faith Healer Dzhuna Davitashvili Dies in Moscow

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Dzhuna Davitashvili

Celebrity mystical healer Dzhuna Davitashvili, who claimed she had the power to prolong life by 100 years and purportedly treated an eclectic array of celebrities — ranging from late Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev to American screen legend Robert De Niro — has died in Moscow at age 65, Russian media reported Monday.

Actor Stanislav Sadalsky, who featured in dozens of Soviet films in the 1970s and 1980s, broke the news of her passing on his blog Monday, claiming Davitashvili died after having fallen into a coma. According to Sadalsky, she felt weak after shopping in a grocery store near her central Moscow flat, and was taken to the hospital by ambulance. Doctors then discovered she was suffering from a serious blood circulation condition, the actor said.

Davitashvili's fame owed largely to the laundry list of celebrities she claimed to have treated, whether remotely or face-to-face. Rumors ran rife that the healer was summoned by Soviet

security services to treat ailing leader Leonid Brezhnev, who died in 1982. Davitashvili never produced evidence of this high-profile purported healing session.

The faith healer's life story is shrouded in mystery that muddles fact and fiction. She was rumored to have treated Russian President Boris Yeltsin, American actor Robert De Niro and Italian film director Federico Fellini, newspaper Komsomolskaya Pravda reported. Devotees believed that Davitashvili's hands warmed up when she was engaging in remote treatment.

The hands of Davitashvili, who also painted and wrote poetry, had not only the power to heal, but also the power to harm. According to Komsomolskaya Pravda, Davitashvili once struck Russian pop legend Alla Pugachyova in the head with an ashtray, settling an alcohol-fueled dispute.

The time and place of Davitashvili's funeral have yet to be announced, though a friend of the healer told Moskovsky Komsomolets she expects the burial will be in Vagankovskoye Cemetery.

Healers with questionable credentials mushroomed around the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union, bursting out across the country's television screens. Professional hypnotist Anatoly Kashpirovsky had a television show in 1989 in which he claimed serious ailments could be cured by the power of thought. One of Kashpirovsky's rivals, faith healer Allan Chumak, once told television viewers to place a glass of water in front of their television sets, promising that it would be “charged with healing energy.”

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