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Lights Go Out in Saratov Cinema, Just as Sell-Out Crowd Sits Down for Nemtsov Documentary

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AP Photo / Alexander Zemlianichenko

The lights went out suddenly on Monday at a movie theater in Saratov, just as a sell-out crowd was sitting down for a special presentation of "The Man Who Was Too Free," a documentary film* about murdered opposition leader Boris Nemtsov.

According to a report by Svobodnye Novosti, the electrical outage knocked out the power in every building on Oktyabrskaya street in Saratov, affecting the cinema, a police station, a church, and several apartment buildings. The electricity cut out just as the coming attractions were wrapping up.

According to an employee at the movie theater, the city's power company is blaming the outage on "an internal malfunction."

Hours before the Nemtsov film was supposed to start, a man identifying himself as an official

at the local branch of Russia's Culture Ministry reportedly phoned the cinema to find out details about the theater's showtimes.

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In Moscow, at the site of Nemtsov's murder, activists have maintained a makeshift memorial, where officials have refused to install so much as a plaque to the slain former deputy prime minister. City workers have also regularly raided the memorial, removing the flowers, candles, and photographs left by Nemtsov's supporters. The memorial is restored after every visit by clean-up crews.

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When the power went out in Saratov, audience members were asked to evacuate the theater, though many people apparently refused to leave, and some even waited around for 90 minutes, hoping the lights would come back on. Monday's showing of "The Man Who Was Too Free" was planned to be a one-time affair, but the theater has now invited the audience back for rescheduled showings on Thursday, Saturday, and next Monday.

The film premiered in Nizhny Novgorod on Feb. 23, drawing a crowd of more than a thousand people. It is also showing in cinemas in Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Yaroslavl — all cities closely linked to Nemtsov's life.

*Disclaimer: Mikhail Fishman, the film's screenwriter, is chief editor of The Moscow Times

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