

Death of a Spy

On Friday, November 23, 2006, Alexander Litvinenko died of poisoning. Before his death, he had raised an aggressive suspicion that this had been caused by Russian intelligence. He linked this with a claim, that he had been investigating the murder of the journalist Anna Politkovskaya, which had been given extensive cover in the Western press, also associated with the openly raised suspicion that this crime had been carried out on the initiative of the Russian government, possibly even President Putin personally. Litvinenko's portrait – with hair in 2002 and without from his hospital bed, was distributed in the press. The way the story was told, however, gives considerable reason for criticism of the related journalism, as sharply criticised in Telepolis [1].

In the Times, Dr. John Henry, a clinical toxicologist who allegedly examined Mr Litvinenko, stated that "There's no doubt that he's been poisoned by thallium" [2]. A few days later, we knew that Dr. Henry never saw the victim – and he had not been poisoned with Thallium. When the real agent was known, the press stopped mentioning thallium, probably trusting their audience's short memory. Now everybody speaks about polonium.

Litvinenko was formerly a KGB spy (later FSB), who left Russia in 2000 and then received British citizenship as a fugitive. He claimed to have been given the task to murder Boris Berezovsky, a Russian-Israeli billionaire, who had abused the Jeltsin era to get extremely rich and since Boris Jeltsin's retirement has been fighting Putin. Litvinenko then attached to Berezovsky's circle and was also recently in Israel, where he met Leonid Nevzlin, former CEO of, and large shareholder in the Yukos oil Co., now Chairman of the Diaspora Museum in Tel Aviv [3].

Polonium-210 as a Poison

Polonium was discovered 1898 by Maria and Pierre Curie, who also described the three isotopes. The radioactive isotope 210 is indeed one of the world's rarest elements. It has a half-life of 138 days and small amounts of it (no more than 100g/year) are made every year in specialist laboratories by bombarding bismuth with neutrons in a nuclear reactor. Its predominant use is connected to batteries in satellites. It is constructed in Russia, China and USA – nobody talked about Israel, so far, but Israel would hardly admit it either, as they never admitted their arsenal of nuclear weapons. A British source claimed that the price for one gram was around 2 million pounds, but you can kill a lot of people with one gram. Without having full understanding of the subject, it appears to me to be one of the most potent substances, used for killing people. Geiger counters that doctors initially used to test Litvinenko for radiation failed to detect it and polonium-210 was found only when further tests were conducted ... "In many other countries it would never have been detected, which may be why it was used" [4].

'Arafat Express'

There is nobody who really knows who killed Litvinenko. Kremlin denied rapidly any involvement which, of course, does not prove that their secret service might not have been involved. It is, however, difficult to recognise any motive. This did not disturb the majority of the press on the day of Litvinenko died to accept that theory without putting a question mark behind it. Let us consider it 'Hypothesis A.'

Alternative hypothesis all assume that the man's death is being used for discrediting Putin and the Russian government. They therefore all have in common to be a false-flag action. Today (Nov. 26) it was finally mentioned as a possibility in part of the Mainstream Media. Independent states that "Detectives investigating the death of Alexander Litvinenko were last night examining the possibility that the former spy killed himself to discredit Vladimir Putin" [5] – 'Hypothesis B.'

From Bahrain comes 'Hypothesis C': "The killing of Litvinenko could have been

1 <http://www.heise.de/tp/r4/artikel/24/24067/1.html>

2 <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,13509-2462023.html>

3 <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/792436.html>

4 <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,231957,00.html>

5 <http://news.independent.co.uk/uk/crime/article2016151.ece>

orchestrated by his associate Boris Berezovsky in order to discredit Russian authorities” [6]. Equally, the before quoted Fox News source, quite unusual for alternative opinions, also mentions “The aide [to Putin] implied Litvinenko’s death was part of a conspiracy by enemies of Putin who had sacrificed one of their own to discredit the Russian president.”

My theory ('Hypothesis D') is equally thinly based and strongly related to a subjective tendency to search mostly in Israel and USA for the origin of state terror. As Arafat died in 2004, also Uri Avnery openly suspected that this was murder – he had foreseen it since 2002, – dictated by Ariel Sharon [7]. The poison which killed Arafat was slowly acting, resulting in multiple organ failure, and it was never detected (we can only hope that litres of urine have been assseverated in Paris, now they know what to look for). Overwhelmed by the similarity of the clinical course of the two victims, I invented the name 'Arafat Express' for the unknown substance. We still don't know if 'Arafat Express' is identical with Polonium-210, but we know that Mossad is the master behind most false-flag operations.

Later addition

I must modify my remarks about the rarity of polonium: there are 130 premises just in England and Wales with a known use of polonium 210 [8]. The security services promised to focus on where the polonium 210 came from. If it was made in a nuclear facility, it will contain traces of other radioactive isotopes that could identify the facility [9]. However, in Internet it is offered for 69 \$ a gram fresh from nuclear power plant [10].

The maximum safe body burden of polonium is only 7 picograms [11]. However, this is a toxic effect to the substance, not a general to the radiation. The nature of this radiation is such that it does not travel over long distances, a few cm at most, and therefore there is no need for public alarm [12]. If he was indeed poisoned by somebody else, his last meeting may be the crucial one: the Times reports that symptoms of polonium-210 poisoning "including vomiting begin to appear an hour or so after the victim is irradiated" [13]. This may, however, not be the case when Litvinenko was the victim of a slowly induced poisoning, possibly transcutaneously induced by careless conservation of the substance.

It seems that Litvinenko left polonium-powder wherever he went in the last weeks. Traces were found not only at his home and the bar where he claims to have been poisoned but also in a hotel room where he has been and in Berezovsky's offices, which were then sealed on Nov. 28 [14]. Even some airplanes showed traces of the poison [15] – why not just one airplane? On Nov. 30, 12 locations were reported to have tested positive to polonium [16], without disturbing the media that it was found in more than one place. This undermines 'Hypothesis E,' that Litvinenko himself transported polonium-210 but ill-preserved and was thus accidentally exposed [17]. Besides, polonium is not suitable for a tea-toxin because, according to one expert cited by the Telegraph, pure polonium-210 cannot be contained in ordinary glassware and could not be administered in liquid form as the drink would bubble and the heat would be too intense. Litvinenko had previously participated in nuclear smuggling; he had told the Italian academic he met on the day he fell ill that he had organised the smuggling of nuclear material to

6 <http://www.gulf-daily-news.com/Story.asp?Article=162870&Sn=WORL&IssueID=29251>

7 <http://www.countercurrents.org/pa-avnery130905.htm>

<http://www.countercurrents.org/pa-avnery130905.htm>

8 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/russia/article/0,,1958619,00.html>

9 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/international/story/0,,1957894,00.html>

10 <http://www.heise.de/tp/r4/artikel/24/24073/1.html>

11 <http://www.rsc.org/chemistryworld/News/2006/November/27110601.asp>

12 http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2006-11/29/content_5405897.htm

13 <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,2087-2472170,00.html>

14 <http://www.24dash.com/centralgovernment/13598.htm>

15 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/russia/article/0,,1960244,00.html>

16 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/russia/article/0,,1960854,00.html>

17 <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2006/11/27/nspsy127.xml>

Zurich in 2000, then as an officer of the Russian secret service [18]. The multiple findings do suggest that he was himself involved in the distribution, and for which reason should also be interesting – London was widely bestowed.

The Israeli track was specified further: The Times reported that Mr Litvinenko travelled to Israel just weeks before he died to hand over evidence to a Russian billionaire [see above] of how agents working for President Putin dealt with his enemies running the Yukos oil company [19]. *It is Putin's great achievement to have disturbed the business of a number of sudden billionaires, who had grasped Russia's national resources in a few years under the corrupt Jeltsin regime!* Before the Yukos scandal flew up, Berezovsky was targeted. He was head of Russian National Security under Boris Jeltsin. When Putin came to power he opened investigations into Berezovsky's business activities, including money laundering. Berezovsky responded by fleeing to the UK where he was granted political asylum.

Approaching the Background of the Crime

Two persons were later shown to have been 'bestowed' with Polonium-210: Litvinenko's wife and the Italian Mario Scaramella, whom the spy met in the Itsu sushi bar in Piccadilly and considered to be responsible for his fate. Mr Litvinenko said: "Mario didn't want anything, he gave me the email printouts ... I said to myself, he could have sent these emails by computer. But instead he wanted to come and give them to me in person: why, and why in such a hurry? He was very nervous." Since being named as Mr Litvinenko's murderer in the Chechen press, his life has been at risk. Mr Scaramella flew for the medical testing to London. In Italy he is at the centre of a criminal investigation, relating to his position as a consultant to the Mitrokhin Commission, an Italian parliamentary body set up in 2001 on the orders of the then Prime Minister, Silvio Berlusconi, to investigate the activities of Soviet and post-Soviet spies in Italy [20].

A motive for killing the spy was revealed by another Russian on December 3 to the Observer [21]: 'He told me he was going to blackmail or sell sensitive information about all kinds of powerful people, including oligarchs, corrupt officials and sources in the Kremlin. He mentioned a figure of £10,000 that they would pay each time to stop him broadcasting these FSB documents. Litvinenko was short of money and was adamant that he could obtain any files he wanted.' Unfortunately, this leaves a large number of suspects to have benefited from his death, but it also removes the shine or innocence from the person – a shine difficult to believe for somebody who was a spy for KGB and later a close friend (?) to Berezovsky.

The before-quoted article of independence adds: 'Nuclear experts insist that only a state would have the resources necessary to produce the polonium-210 used in the killing' – leaving Russia, Israel and Great Britain at the centre of suspicion. Therefore, do not forget Litvinenko's recent travel to Israel when summing up the suspects!

How to Kill a Spy

In my youth, 'we' (I mean of course on film) killed the spies – the few of them who were not killed by a handgun or put against the wall and shot – by adding some poison in their drinks. It then acted in seconds, a speed which I never managed to meet in my real life as anaesthetist, not killing, of course, but inducing sleep; when dealing with a screaming child, you could sometimes use the speed showed on film.

In the Litvinenko-case, death was painful and protracted and the poison widely distributed. It has now been identified also in five air-planes, in an office at the British embassy in Moscow and in two apartments in and near Hamburg in Germany. Beside Mr. Litvinenko, his wife and Mr. Scaramella, also one of his business-associates, Mr. Dimitri Kovtun, with whom Litvinenko had a meeting on November 1 before going to the Sushi-bar, had tested positive to polonium-210. On the scene of this meeting, the Pine Bar at the Millennium hotel, there were also polonium traces and all seven employees tested

18 <http://news.independent.co.uk/uk/crime/article2023856.ece>

19 <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,2-2473385,00.html>

20 <http://news.independent.co.uk/uk/crime/article2035184.ece>

21 http://observer.guardian.co.uk/uk_news/story/0,,1962759,00.html

positive to the substance, but none at the Sushi bar [22]. The other participant in the meeting, Mr. Andrei Lugovoi, also a former KGB officer, had probably made the track in the embassy [23] whereas Mr. Kovtun had introduced it to Germany [24]. Lugovoi said that ""Traces were found even on my children and on my wife" [25]. A British Airways flight and five rooms in the Sheraton Park Lane, used by Mr Lugovoi and his party on Oct. 25, have tested positive for polonium-210. Traces were also found at Arsenal's Emirates stadium, where Mr Lugovoi and his partner, Dimitri Kovtun, watched a match with CSKA Moscow on Nov. 1, after the meeting with Litvinenko. How on earth could the formerly rare molecule get so widely disseminated?

As mentioned above, the drink is a bad route for dispersing the poison. However, another route has shown to be quite appropriate and could explain some of the disperse effects: inhalation from cigarettes [26]. Still, even if the first victim of the poison was very liberal with his cigarettes (whoever may have punched them beforehand) and kindly offered them to his guests, the distribution is difficult to explain. By the way, polonium (another isotope) is a natural occurrence at microscopic doses by cigarette smoking and thought to be responsible for the development of lung cancer in many smokers.

Mr Scaramella claimed to have received a 5 times lethal dose [27], which then still is only 1/20 of Litvinenko's dose [28]. Presently, however, he is feeling well. So does Mr. Lugovoi whereas conflicting reports exist concerning Mr, Kovtun's condition; both men are currently at a hospital in Moscow [29,30]. I advocate them all to stop smoking, not strictly knowing if they do! Meanwhile, the idea of a carelessly distributed powder over more than a week is also a concept to be followed – in that case, Litvinenko's death was possibly self-inflicted and accidental.

December 9, 2006

After eight month, the case suddenly exploded. Britain had for a couple of month demanded Mr. Lugovoi extradited from Russia, a demand which was rejected. Now, in July, four Russian diplomats were expelled, whereupon Russia expelled four British from Moscow. The cold war has started again, and it was not started by Russia!

Britain had for years rejected the Russian claim to deliver Mr. Berezovsky, without having led to a diplomatic crisis. Shortly before, Brazilian officials vowed to seek the extradition of Mr. Berezovsky from the UK to face charges of money laundering [31]. Arrest warrants were forwarded to the Interpol. Now, another strange story emerged, as reported by the Guardian on July 19 [32]: A Russian hitman allegedly plotted to shoot Berezovsky at the London Hilton. The suspected assassin was intercepted in June before he could mount an attempt on the life of poor Berezovsky. His plan, apparently, had been to acquire a weapon in the UK. His mistake was to request a meeting at the Hilton. Then, according to Mr. Berezovsky, the killer was to have murdered him. The man was arrested on June 21. His visa was revoked and he was then deported. In summary, there were no weapon and the whole story relied on Berezovsky's interpretation, not sufficing for any indictment. Poor Guardian! After they failed to raise questions on the alleged terror attacks weeks earlier, they seem to march to their government's patriotic tune.

22 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/russia/article/0,,1967289,00.html>

23 <http://news.independent.co.uk/uk/crime/article2054667.ece>

24 <http://www.baz.ch/news/index.cfm?ObjectID=63E15E57-1422-0CEF-70EA14E5DEB19E1C>

25 <http://news.independent.co.uk/europe/article2060004.ece>

26 http://blogs.usatoday.com/ondeadline/2006/12/hotel_now_focus.html

27 <http://www.thisislondon.co.uk/news/article-23376936->

<http://www.thisislondon.co.uk/news/article-23376936->
[details/I%20have%20five%20times%20lethal%20poison%20dose,%20claims%20spy%20contact/article.do](http://www.thisislondon.co.uk/news/article-23376936-)

<http://www.thisislondon.co.uk/news/article-23376936->
[details/I%20have%20five%20times%20lethal%20poison%20dose,%20claims%20spy%20contact/article.do](http://www.thisislondon.co.uk/news/article-23376936-)

28 <http://www.baz.ch/news/index.cfm?ObjectID=5681DE0A-1422-0CEF-70E6869ACDEB48F4>

29 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/russia/article/0,,1966885,00.html>

30 <http://en.rian.ru/russia/20061207/56614365.html>

31 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/russia/article/0,,2126356,00.html>

32 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/russia/article/0,,2129752,00.html>

On December 2, 2007, the Daily Mail reported that Alexander Litvinenko was receiving a retainer of around £2,000 a month from the MI6 at the time he was murdered [33]. His suspected killer in Russia was a little later elected to the Duma and now enjoys parliamentary immunity [34]

Dec. 8, 2007

33 http://www.dailymail.co.uk/pages/live/articles/news/news.html?in_article_id=490007&in_page_id=1770

34 <http://news.independent.co.uk/europe/article3220965.ece>