



MI5 TOLD LITVINENKO: YOUR LIFE IS IN DANGER

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Alexander Litvinenko was warned by British and American secret agents that his life was in danger because of his ties with exiled Russian oligarch Boris Berezovsky, *The Mail on Sunday* can reveal.

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Litvinenko told Italian security adviser Mario Scaramella at their now-infamous lunch at a sushi restaurant that he had 'interrupted' his work with Berezovsky on 'US and British advice'.

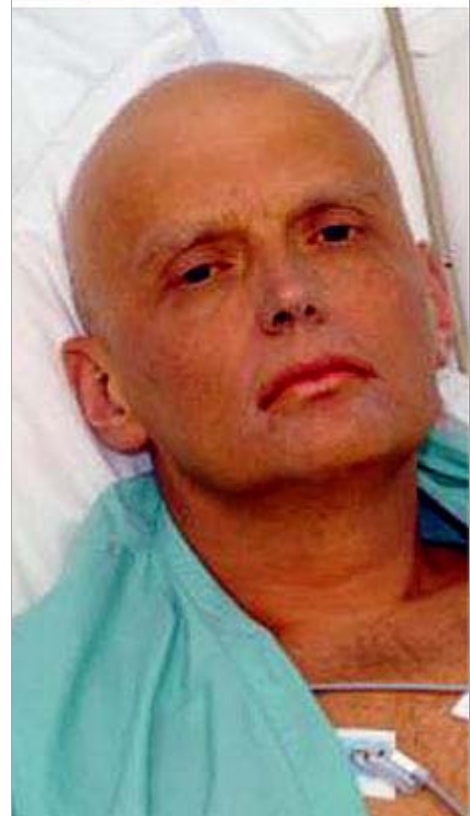
Scaramella then told another Russian intelligence specialist - who is under the protection of the French secret services - that Litvinenko had recently fallen out with Berezovsky. Evgeni Limarev said: 'I had very strong information, confirmed by Mario, that Litvinenko had quarrelled with Berezovsky. I can't say more than that.'

Limarev then produced an e-mail which he said had come from Scaramella on the day of the sushi bar meeting, referring to Litvinenko 'interrupting relations' with Berezovsky on the advice of the US and Britain. Limarev refused to show *The Mail on Sunday* the whole of the email, which was written in very poor English.

But he said that Scaramella told him that Litvinenko had been warned by agents.

It is the first suggestion of the involvement of Western intelligence agents in the intrigue and the most direct hint that Litvinenko could have been targeted because of his ties to Berezovsky's circle.

The tycoon claimed political asylum to Britain in 2001 after being accused of business irregularities, and is seen as the unofficial leader of the band of Russian dissidents who live in London.



Exiled tycoon Boris Berezovsky, and Litvinenko in hospital

Limarev produced the extract from the email in an exclusive interview with The Mail on Sunday yesterday morning at a location near his safe house in the French Alps.

Limarev also responded to claims that he sent information to Scaramella which caused him to set up the sushi lunch. He is said to have warned that both Scaramella and Litvinenko were at risk of being killed by renegade members of Spetsnaz, the Russian equivalent of the SAS, because of their criticism of Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Spetsnaz, an elite unit attached to the intelligence section of the army, specialises in close quarters hand-to-hand combat.

Limarev, 41, who admits to links with Russian intelligence agencies but denies reports that he was ever a listed KGB officer, fled Russia seven years ago after falling out with influential politicians and businessmen in Moscow.

Chain-smoking nervously, he denied being the sole source of the information which Scaramella used as a pretext to arrange the lunch. 'I was just one of many sources for that information,' he said. 'Scaramella used me to distract attention from himself and because he was scared.'

Astonishingly, Limarev also claimed that he was the victim of a suspicious robbery in Rome on the day that news of Litvinenko's condition broke. While he was in Italy, a bag containing Limarev's personal papers and house keys were stolen. Three days later the keys were used to try to gain entry to his safe house 500 miles away - but the locks had already been changed.

He said: 'What worries me is that very few people knew I was in Italy and knew where I was staying. They tried to enter my house very professionally. The tyres on my car had also been let down.'

Limarev says he first encountered Litvinenko in 2001, contacting him to ask him to speak to Berezovsky about possible business deals.

Litvinenko then introduced Limarev to Scaramella, who invited him to help with his work on an Italian Parliamentary investigation - the Mitrokhin Commission - into KGB activity in the country during the Cold War. Limarev says he stopped working for Scaramella in 2005 after he became concerned about the Commission's activities.

He said: 'I don't know who pays Scaramella. My guess is that his money comes from a number of sources - very likely US and Italian, but I really don't know if he gets anything from Russia.'

'Scaramella seems to be obsessed with nuclear topics,' he added, referring to Scaramella's work for a mysterious outfit called the Environmental Crime Prevention Program, which apparently uses satellites to track nuclear waste.

'But I don't think Mario was Litvinenko's killer. Maybe the killers contaminated him a little at the same time as they poisoned Alex to implicate him, maybe he was contaminated by accident.'

'I also think the two Russians who met Litvinenko later that afternoon were used: the killers will have followed him for weeks, and then decided that this was the perfect day to do the hit.'

Limarev added that he was called by Alex Goldfarb, who has acted as a spokesman for Litvinenko's family during the affair, last Sunday when his picture appeared in The Mail on Sunday over revelations about the mysterious robbery in Rome.

Limarev said that Mr Goldfarb told him: 'Welcome to the club,' - the 'club' being the small group of Russians involved in the drama.

Limarev, whose father was a senior KGB officer, says he retains good sources in the Russian intelligence services.

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