

Lavrov, Russian Doctors Dispute Hague Tribunal

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov answered questions from the press on March 13:

Q: I would like to learn about the text of Slobodan Milosevic's letter. Did he write about any attempts to poison him?

Lavrov: Slobodan Milosevic's letter arrived yesterday. It is dated March 8, but arrived only yesterday. I do not know the cause of the delay. The letter is not addressed to me personally, but to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It expresses concern that, in his view, some of the treatment methods applied to him by doctors of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia were having a ruinous effect on his health. He asked in this letter to again raise before the Tribunal the question of Russia's readiness to accept Milosevic for treatment in Russia.

As you know, he had made such a request before. In response to it the Russian Federation gave the Tribunal 100% state guarantees that after taking the course of treatment, Milosevic would return to The Hague. These guarantees were examined at a special meeting of the Tribunal, which deemed them insufficient. That is, in fact, they didn't trust Russia. This cannot but worry us. It cannot but alarm us that shortly afterwards, Slobodan Milosevic died. A forensic autopsy is now being carried out over there. We are in a situation where they did not trust us, and also have the right not to believe and not to trust those who are carrying out this autopsy. We asked the Tribunal to let our doctors take part in the autopsy or, at least, acquaint themselves with its results. Now a group of our doctors is getting ready to urgently go to The Hague.

Doctors' Report

The delegation of four Russian physicians met in The Hague for several hours with doctors who had performed the autopsy on the body of Slobodan Milosevic. Delegation head Leo Bokeriya, head of the Bakulev Cardiovascular Surgery Center, afterwards told Russian Channel 1 TV that he was satisfied with the quality of the autopsy, which was documented with 12 hours of videotape, slides, and other physical data, but dissatisfied with the care Milosevic had received beforehand, and the refusal of Tribunal authorities to release him for treatment in Moscow.

According to Itar-Tass, Bokeriya said, "Milosevic belonged to the category of patients with a light coronary condition. He

had only one vessel affected. It could have been cured.” The news agency further summarized Dr. Bokeriya’s opinion: “If Milosevic had been taken to any specialized Russian hospital, the more so to such a hospital institution as ours, he would have been subjected to coronographic examination, two stents would have been made, and he would have lived for many long years to come. A person has died in our contemporary epoch, when all the methods to treat him were available and the proposals of our country and the reputation of our medicine were ignored. As a result, they did what they wanted to do.”

Bokeriya added that his team had requested that the materials from the autopsy, including microscopic examinations, be provided to the Russian experts when the overall investigation has been completed. On the question of toxicology, Bokeriya said: “The ongoing analysis may take up to three months, although I am almost 100% sure this was a sudden death, caused by Milosevic’s cardiopathology.” He said that the evidence he had viewed directly did not support the theory of direct poisoning, but he added, “Unfortunately, it is an absolutely banal fact that he died due to lack of medical treatment. That’s all.”

In remarks made March 17 after his return to Moscow,

Dr. Bokeriya reiterated that the evident cause of death was “the narrowing of the main blood vessel, which brought about an infarction,” or heart attack. Itar-Tass reported: “Dr. Bokeriya admitted, however, that even this plain confirmation of the fact is tantamount to a slap in the face of the Tribunal for war crimes in the former Yugoslavia.” The Russian physician said, “We pressed them for three years to allow the man to get genuine hospital treatment so that the doctors could issue a diagnosis for him, but nothing of the kind was ever done.”



NATO

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said, regarding the Tribunal’s refusal to allow Milosevic to receive treatment at a Russian hospital: “They didn’t trust Russia. This cannot but worry us.”