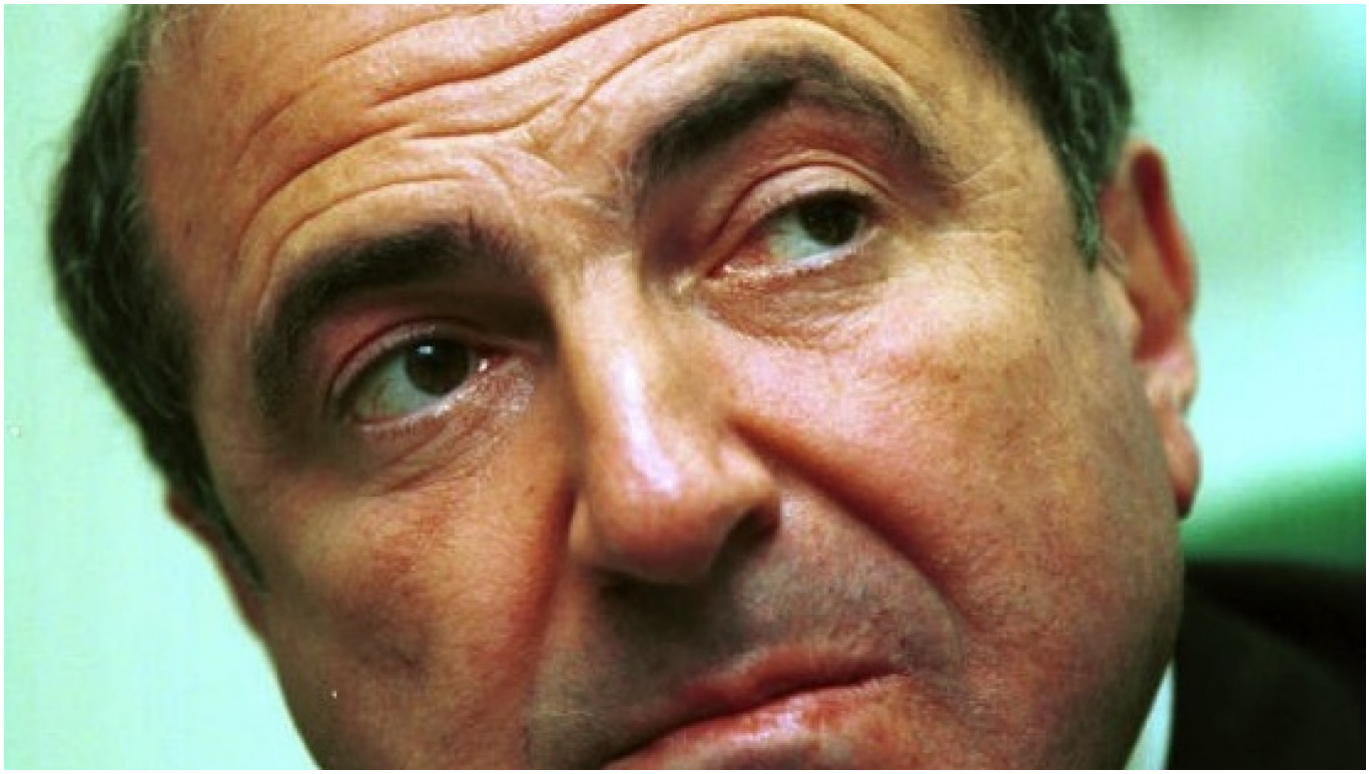
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Berezovsky Death Remains Mystery as Coroner Records Open Verdict

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The death of Boris Berezovsky in March 2013 continues to raise questions.

A British coroner has recorded an open verdict on the death of self-exiled Russian tycoon Boris Berezovsky after hearing conflicting evidence from experts.

Berkshire Coroner Peter Bedford said Thursday he could not prove beyond all reasonable doubt that the tycoon had been killed or had committed suicide.

"I am not saying Berezovsky took his own life, I am not saying Berezovsky was unlawfully killed. What I am saying is that the burden of proof sets such a high standard it is impossible for me to say," he said.

Berezovsky, who had resided in self-imposed exile in Britain since 2000, died under mysterious circumstances last March.

He was found dead on the bathroom floor of his home in Ascot with a scarf tied around his neck, part of which was attached to a shower rail.

Pathologist Simon Poole, who carried out the post-mortem examination, confirmed earlier conclusions that the marks on Berezovsky's body were consistent with hanging and there were no signs of a struggle.

Professor Bernd Brinkmann, a renowned German expert on hanging and asphyxiation, gave a contrary opinion however. He said that the marks on the man's neck were "far away from the typical inverse 'V' shape" seen on those who took their own life.

He believed that the businessman was first strangled by someone and was then hung to the shower rail.

Investigators also failed to identify a fingerprint that someone had left in Berezovsky's bathroom or establish the identity of an unknown man seen outside the businessman's house two days before he died.

Witnesses said on Wednesday that the tycoon had been depressed after losing his multibillion-dollar legal battle with Chelsea Football Club owner Roman Abramovich in August 2012.

Berezovsky sought $5.1 billion in compensation from Abramovich, claiming the latter had intimidated him into selling his stake in Russian oil giant Sibneft. The lawsuit was rejected as the judge called Berezovsky's testimony "dishonest," "unimpressive" and "inherently unreliable."

Berezovsky's bodyguard of six years Avi Navama told the inquest the tycoon was "broken" by this legal failure during the last six months of his life.

Navama said that when he last saw his employer, he "looked at me with very low, tired eyes, like he didn't know what to do."

Other witnesses said that the former tycoon was ready to continue his legal battle with Abramovich.

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