

Scientific article

DOI 10.28995/2073-0101-2026-3-811-827

For citation

Fando, R. A. (2026). "Took an Active Part in the murder of V. R. Menzhinsky", Investigative Case of Dr. I. N. Kazakov, 1930s, Herald of an Archivist, no. 3, pp. 811-827. DOI 10.28995/2073-0101-2026-3-811-827

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"Took an Active Part in the murder of V. R. Menzhinsky", Investigative Case of Dr. I. N.

Kazakov, 1930s

Abstract

The article deals with a tragic chapter in the life of medical scientist I. N. Kazakov. Based on investigative materials from the Central Archive of the Federal Security Service of Russia, which is now available for scientific circulation for the first time, the paper clarifies the details of the arrest, investigation, and interrogation of the physician accused of the premeditated murder of V. R. Menzhinsky through deliberately improper treatment with lysates—medicines derived from animal tissue. In the 1930s, lysate therapy gained widespread popularity, despite criticism from many specialists in endocrinology, medical biochemistry, and therapy. Scientists, physicians, and government officials were drawn into the debate over the effectiveness of lysates in treating various pathologies. Dr. I. N. Kazakov's explanation of the physiological effects of glandular extracts on the human body from the standpoint of dialectical materialism was welcomed by the Party leadership, which promoted the widespread dissemination of this new treatment method. By a resolution of the Council of People's Commissars of the RSFSR dated January 26, 1932 the State Scientific Research Institute of Metabolism and Endocrine Disorders (GNIIOVER) was established in Moscow headed by I. N. Kazakov. In February of that year at the invitation of M. G. Kushner, head of the sanitary department of the Joint State Political Directorate (OGPU), Dr. I. N. Kazakov began treating OGPU chairman V. R. Menzhinsky. The doctor documented the patient's angina, endarteritis (narrowing of the blood vessels) of the lower extremities, kidney inflammation, and swelling of the skin and mucous membranes (cyanosis), after which he proposed lysate injection therapy. L. G. Levin, head of the therapeutic department of the Kremlin Hospital, who oversaw V. R. Menzhinsky's treatment, expressed a number of doubts regarding the effectiveness of lysate therapy; therefore, the lysate treatment of the OGPU leader was not systemic, but rather episodic. The fate of Kazakov's treatment methods was finally decided by a court ruling against the anti-Soviet Bloc of Rightists and Trotskyites. On December 14, 1937 I. N. Kazakov, director of the State Scientific Research Institute of the Red Cross was arrested on charges of counterrevolutionary activity. The institute immediately responded to Kazakov's arrest; he was dismissed on December 15, 1937 and on January 17, 1938 at a meeting of the institute's scientific council, it was decided to withdraw the petition previously submitted to the Higher Attestation Commission (VAK) for the award of a doctorate of science without a dissertation. The defendants were interrogated for three months, followed by a public trial of party officials, government officials, and healthcare administrators, including I. N.

Kazakov. Initially, I. N. Kazakov provided investigators with details of the symptoms and course of V. R. Menzhinsky's illness, as well as the rationale for the selection of lysate therapy methods for him. Over time, the accused's testimony changed dramatically. NKVD officers were able to extract a "confession" from I. N. Kazakov about collaborating with L. G. Levin and the USSR People's Commissar of Internal Affairs G. G. Yagoda in the "premeditated murder" of V. R. Menzhinsky. On March 15, 1938, by order of the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR, I. N. Kazakov was executed at the Kommunarka firing range near Moscow.

Keywords

Kremlin Hospital, State Scientific Research Institute of Metabolism and Endocrine Disorders (GNIIOVER), Kazakov I. N., Menzhinsky V. R., Levin L. G., Central Archive of the Federal Security Service of Russia, the case of the Bloc of Rightists and Trotskyites, lysate therapy, Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the Soviet Union, Kommunarka.

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The article was received in the editorial office on 3.02.2025, recommended for publication on 20.06.2026

You can read completely article in the russian historic-archival magazine “The Herald of an Archivist”. Read more about terms of subscription [here](#) .

Полностью материал публикуется в российском историко-архивоведческом журнале ВЕСТНИК АРХИВИСТА. Ознакомьтесь с условиями подписки [здесь](#) .