

CRIMINAL CASE OF POLICEMAN O. POSEVIN AS A SOURCE FOR STUDYING THE NAZI OCCUPATION OF KHARKIV

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***Abstract.** One of the tragic pages of World War II was betrayal. Analyzing this phenomenon, researchers identify different causes, but cowardice and fear of death are still considered to be the main ones.*

The purpose of this publication is to shed light on the criminal case of Aleksandr Posievin, who served as a policeman during the Nazi invasion of Kharkiv.

Studying the investigative case of Aleksandr Posievin, it can be stated that the material collected by the investigators is a valuable source for studying many aspects of the history of the Nazi occupation of Kharkiv, and also provides an opportunity to create a generalized portrait of traitors to the Motherland who went over to the side of the enemy during World War II.

***Key words:** Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Posevin, World War II, Kharkiv, occupation, betrayal, police, criminal case.*

One of the tragic pages of World War II was betrayal. Analyzing this phenomenon, researchers identify different causes, but cowardice and fear of death are still considered to be the main ones.

The attitude towards traitors in society and at the legislative level has always been negative. Even after years, regardless of subsequent labor merits, and an active life position, society demanded the highest punishment for the defectors. Especially severe punishment was demanded of traitors by the victims and their relatives.

The purpose of this publication is to shed light on the criminal case of Alexander Aleksandrovich Posevin, who served as a police officer during the Nazi occupation of Kharkiv.

Researchers of the period of occupation in the city's history are well aware of the story of

O. Posevin's arrest. This is periodically written about in the local press [see, for example, 2]. These articles mainly tell the story of his arrest and list particularly resonant mass murders of Kharkiv residents committed under the leadership or with the participation of O. Posevin. However, his criminal case has not yet been exhaustively investigated, although it is considered unclassified. The reasons for this are its volume (42 volumes) and its location in the Zaporizhzhia region, not the Kharkiv.

Aleksandr Aleksandrovych was born in 1916 in Velykyi Tokmak (starting now – Tokmak) in the Zaporizhzhia region. He completed four grades. Before the war, he worked on a state farm in the Donbas and served in the Red Army. He married in 1936. A month after the German attack on the Soviet Union, he was mobilized. On July 22, he was sent to the front with the rank of sergeant as commander of the 3rd squad, 2nd platoon, 2nd sapper company, 532nd separate army sapper battalion of the 28th army, which was then part of the Southwestern Front.

In 1942, the army participated in the infamous Battle of Kharkiv (May–July 1942). During the fighting in the Belgorod region, O. Posevin was captured and soon switched to the service of the occupiers. At first, he served as a private policeman, but soon he was appointed commander of a police company (battalion) [1, vol. 1, p. 58; 1, vol. 2, p. 103]. Together with other police and SD officers, O. Posevin helped maintain the "new order" established by the Nazis and participated in the mass murders of Kharkiv residents carried out in 1942–1943 in the Lisopark area and near the city in the village of Podvorki, Dergachevsky district. Shortly before the first liberation of Kharkiv from the German invaders, in February 1943, Aleksandr Aleksandrovich, along with other police officers, was evacuated to Zhytomyr. Here he headed the security and patrol services of Kharkiv residents.

After the re-occupation of Kharkiv by the Nazis, the police officers returned home to resume and maintain the "new order". During the five months of the second occupation of the city, O. Posevin continued to participate in the mass murders of civilians in Lisopark and near Podvorki.

As early as the fall of 1942, Aleksandr Aleksandrovych began living with Anna Bunina, who only became his official wife in 1953 [1, vol. 2, p. 126].

In August 1943, a few days before the liberation of Kharkiv, O. Posevin and his partner evacuated to Dnipropetrovsk (now – Dnipro), and from there, they returned home to Tokmak. When Tokmak was liberated from the Nazis, he was again drafted into the Red Army. This time, he was appointed a private soldier serving as a sanitation worker in the X-ray room of a medical unit. Aleksandr Aleksandrovych served until 1946. He returned home with decorations: the medals "For Courage" and "For the Victory over Germany in the Great Patriotic War 1941–1945", along with several commendations from the command of military units [1, vol. 1, p. 39].

After demobilization, O. Posevin and his family initially lived in Western Ukraine, where he worked as a tractor driver in villages of the Drohobych (now – Lviv) region. Here he joined the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). Due to harassment by Ukrainian nationalists, the family returned to Tokmak. There, Aleksandr Aleksandrovych worked in several enterprises. He was characterized positively everywhere. He was elected as a City's Deputy and District Council of People's Deputies, a member of the Tokmak District Committee of the Communist Party of the Ukrainian SSR, and received government awards [1, vol. 1, p. 39–40; 2].

The investigation into the crimes of O. Posevin began in the 1980s. This was preceded by a scandal he caused at the local Military Enlistment Office. In 1985, in honor of the 40th anniversary of the Victory over Nazi Germany, veterans were awarded the Order of the Patriotic War. Aleksandr Aleksandrovych came to the Military Enlistment Office to find out why he had not received the award for a long time. The captain promised to investigate and report back in one or

two weeks. During this time, the officer discovered the real "warpath" of O. Posevin during World War II.

Immediately in 1985, he was expelled from the Communist Party for deliberate deception of the party [1, vol. 1, p. 78].

It is possible that the State Security Committee (KGB) Directorate for the Zaporizhzhia Region also joined the case at that time, beginning an investigation into the criminal case. On October 13, 1987, the head of the investigative department of the KGB Directorate for the Zaporizhzhia Region, Lieutenant Colonel Yu. Kobets, issued a decree to initiate a criminal case "against Posevin Aleksandr Aleksandrovych for committing treason against the Motherland under the signs of a crime provided for in Article 56, Part 1 of the Criminal Code of the Ukrainian SSR with the application of the Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR of March 4, 1965 "On the punishment of persons guilty of offenses against peace and humanity and war crimes, regardless of the time of the commission of the crimes" and the Resolution of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR of September 3, 1965, explaining the application of this Decree" [1, vol. 1, p. 1–2].

A 9-member investigative team was created to investigate the case, including senior investigators for significant cases of the KGB Directorates for the Zaporizhzhia and Kharkiv Regions [1, vol. 1, p. 13].

Although the criminal case states that the KGB Directorate for the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKVD) in Kharkiv Oblast issued a warrant for the arrest of O. Posevin as early as April 5, 1943 [1, vol. 2, p. 153], he is not listed in the "Reference-List of the Officer and Enlisted Personnel of the Gestapo, Schutzpolizei Detachments, Ordnungspolizei, Ukrainian Security Police, Gendarmerie, Military and Local Commandants, as well as Penal and Police Battalions that Existed in Ukraine during the German-Fascist Occupation (1941–1944)" [see: 3].

At first, O. Posevin was under arrest in Zaporizhzhia, and on December 16, 1987, he was transferred to Kharkiv [1, vol. 1, p. 35].

At his first interrogation at the KGB Directorate of the Zaporizhzhia region on October 13, 1987, the suspect admitted that he served in the Kharkiv police, but stated: "I served as a private police officer in the police. I was not the commander of a platoon or battalion of the SD. I did nothing in the police. <...> I did not have a German rank in the SD. I served in the police until February 1943, when the Soviet Army launched an offensive on Kharkiv. <...> I did not participate in punitive actions. I did not lead similar executions" [1, vol. 1, p. 79]. However, under pressure from the collected documents and witness testimony, he gradually began to admit his involvement in the mass shootings of civilians in Kharkiv in 1942–1943.

A large range of documents was gathered for the investigation of the offenses of O. Posevin. Documents were requested from the Kharkiv Region State Archive (starting now – KRSA), the Central Archive of the USSR Ministry of Defense, the KGB Central Archive of the USSR, and the Stasi Records Archive.

From the KRSA, lists of policemen, German instructions on the creation of the Ukrainian police, the recruitment of prisoners of war into the security police detachments, their duties, training, etc. were presented.

Also, picked up the materials of the Kharkiv Extraordinary State Commission for the Establishment and Investigation of the Atrocities of the Nazi-Fascist Invaders and Their Accomplices and the Damage Caused by Them to Citizens, Collective Farms, Public Organizations, State Enterprises and Institutions of the USSR. The commission conducted exhumation and forensic examination of corpses from places of mass killings in the city and region.

The Central Archive of the USSR Ministry of Defense provided information about the renaming of the battalion in which O. Posevin served and his being taken off of rations in 1942 "as a straggler in the village of Stanove" [1, vol. 1, p. 58] in the Belgorod region.

The KGB Central Archive of the USSR sent copies of the interrogations of the official of the 60th group of the German field secret police, senior sergeant of the auxiliary police, Rezclav Reingard, officer of the German military counterintelligence, Langheld Wilhelm, and deputy commander of the SS "Sonderkommando SD" company, Untersturmführer SS, Hans Ritz, who were involved in the famous trial of the atrocities of the Nazi-fascist invaders on the territory of the city of Kharkiv and the Kharkiv region during their temporary occupation, which took place on December 15–18, 1943.

Valuable material was received from the Stasi Records Archive. Even today, despite the possibility of freely visiting German archives, the submitted selection of documents is a unique source for a researcher of the occupation period of Kharkiv. It contains both general documents on the activities of the rear organs of the Wehrmacht, as well as those that relate to events that specifically took place in the city and region. The accompanying letter contains brief biographical data on some of the German leaders of the city occupied by the Germans. A copy of a book about SS uniforms, published in 1971 in London, was sent with the archival materials.

Also, during the proceedings, the investigators turned to the criminal cases of Kharkiv police officers arrested earlier, starting in 1943. Some of them testified at this trial, re-testifying about the repressions against Kharkiv residents in 1941–1943. They showed the buildings in which various administrative and punitive bodies of the Nazis were located during the occupation. In addition, they showed the weapons they wore during their service in the police and which they used in punitive operations or executions. Also, at the site of the mass murders of Kharkiv residents, they marked where the graves were, who and how they were dug, how the victims entered there, and how they were killed (today in Lisopark on this site there is a Memorial of Glory, erected in 1977). During interrogations of this category of witnesses, photographing and video recording of their testimony was carried out.

A documentary film about the atrocities of the Nazis and their collaborators in Kharkiv during the occupation was attached to the case.

After learning about the ongoing investigation in the city, some people who survived the occupation came to the KGB Directorate and told them that their relatives, acquaintances, or neighbors were buried in Lisopark. The biographical data of several victims who found their last resting place in mass graves were clarified. Their photographs were presented to the investigation. These were people of all ages, hostages, suspects in the fight against the Nazis, and even innocent Kharkiv residents.

Such a large body of documents made it possible to prove the guilt of O. Posevin not only in treason to his homeland but also in his participation in the execution of civilians.

Since the suspect committed atrocities while serving in the military, his case was transferred to the military prosecutor of the Kyiv Military District on March 29, 1989, and was brought before a military tribunal. The media widely covered the trial. For example, after hearing about the trial on the radio, one of the Kharkiv residents, Kateryna Hryhorovych, came to the courtroom and told how she was caught in a raid in June 1943 and was imprisoned in the SD prison, where there were many women and children. Shortly before the liberation of the city, she was taken to Lisopark with other unfortunate people for execution. But K. Hryhorovych managed to survive. Two bullets wounded her. At night, two women dug her out of the grave after hearing screams [2].

Aleksandr Posievin was sentenced to death by firing squad. The sentence was carried out in the

fall of 1988.

The material collected during the investigation of the case of O. Posevin is of tremendous value today for researchers of the history of the war between the Soviet Union and Germany. Of course, it can be said that there are few new facts in it. Much of what was said in 1988 has been known since the fall of 1943 from the results of the work of the Extraordinary Commission for the Establishment and Investigation of the Atrocities of the Nazi-Fascist Invaders and Their Accomplices and the Damage Caused by Them to Citizens, Collective Farms, Public Organizations, State Enterprises and Institutions of the USSR.

Even in 1943, NKVD officers conducted surveys of Kharkiv residents about their lives during the occupation, about the atrocities of the Nazis and traitors, and identified the locations of mass killings of civilians.

The compilation of the material itself facilitates the work of the researcher. After all, it contains documents from central archives in Moscow, archives of some cities in Ukraine, and even Germany. Valuable information is the addresses of various administrative, economic, and punitive institutions of the Wehrmacht and auxiliary civilian organizations created by representatives of the civilian population.

Today in Ukraine, studying the daily life of people of different categories in different historical periods is all the rage in historical science. The material collected in the case provides diverse information on various aspects of the history of everyday life. For example, it makes it possible to trace the living conditions, the service of the police, their morals, the quality of the performance of their duties, and their relations with each other, with the Nazis, and with the residents. The case contains information about the public hanging in September or October 1942 of one of the policemen (name and surname unknown) for theft and disclosure of official secrets [1, vol. 13, p. 32]. This incident demonstrates the legal aspect of the activities of the police officers: for what and how they were punished.

The attitude of former police officers who served their time and were summoned as witnesses in this investigation is also interesting. For example, one of them, I. Korzhyk stated that he "did not feel like testifying in this case" and therefore "did not bother to remember" [1, vol. 9, p. 35]. Similar statements can be read from other witnesses – former police officers.

The topic of the attitude of former police officers to their crimes in the postwar period is also interesting. How did they live with this burden? After all, they practically did not tell anyone about it. This is evidenced by the fact, for example, that only two of O. Posevin's wives knew about his Kharkiv period because they communicated with him during those years. For his children and acquaintances, his arrest and accusations were a shock. After all, before that, Aleksandr Posievin was perceived by them as a caring father, a diligent worker, a public activist, and a defender of the Motherland.

Thus, studying the investigative case of Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Posevin, it can be stated that the material collected by the investigators is a valuable source for studying many aspects of the history of the occupation of Kharkiv by the Nazis, and also makes it possible to compose a generalized portrait of traitors to the Motherland who went over to the side of the enemy during World War II.

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