

“Museum of Soviet Occupation under attack: the pretexts”

BY Vakhtang Kipiani

Kipiani calls Anna Zhuravska’s letter attacking the activities of Roman Krutsyk, the head of the Memorial Society in Kyiv, a Stalinist style denunciation pure and simple. Noting that the letter bears the number assigned to it by the Kyiv Municipal State Administration, Kipiani expresses regret that city officials are wasting their time and research on investigating the ravings contained in Zhuravska’s letter.

He notes that in the last few weeks Krutsyk was visited by associates of the Mayor’s Office and the SBU. The clerk from City Hall took pictures of the current exhibit, *The People’s War*, whose materials are based on archival materials stored in regional branches of the SBU. The exhibit reveals the powerful anti-Soviet movement that took place in Ukraine against Bolshevik rule in the 1920s. The SBU officer who visited Krutsyk misrepresented himself to Krutsyk, calling himself a representative of the so-called “Jewish Department.”

Kipiani and Krutsyk decide to pay a visit to the author of the denunciatory letter, who is registered as a resident of the 400-year-old village of Obtove, located in the Krolevets district of Sumy region, population: 1,500.

There are several theories circulating about Zhuravska’s identity, e.g., she is an activist of the Communist Party or Party of Regions. The two men go to the village council building, where some female employees tell them that Zhuravska disappeared from the village without a trace about two years ago and has never been seen again. The council treasurer, Svitlana Mykolaivna, showed the journalist and Krutsyk a document about pension payments. Next to Zhuravska’s name is the phrase: “disappeared without a trace.”

Next, they speak to a couple of village grannies, who say they know “Anka.” She drank relentlessly, lived like a bum, and then disappeared. The old women give the men directions on how to get to Zhuravska’s abandoned house in a corner of the village. The villagers know Zhuravska better by the surname of Khablenko. The missing woman has two children. On the street Kipiani and Krutsyk run into Zhuravska’s neighbour, an old woman named Shura Medved, who takes them to Zhuravska’s filthy, wrecked, and empty house, the front yard of which is densely overgrown with greenery. The visit confirms that the house has been unoccupied for a long time.

Granny Shura says that when Anna did not drink she was a hardworking and nice person. She worked as an orderly in the raion (county) hospital in Krolevets. But when she started drinking, the binge would last a long time. She was always getting herself into trouble, and drunkards would come to her house. The old woman directs the two men to an area called Novoselivka, where Zhuravska’s daughter Natalia lives with her children. When they arrive, they learn that she is living in another hamlet. The house is occupied by Mykola Baranovsky, Natalia’s father-in-law. Baranovsky says that he has not seen Zhuravska for more than two years. Shortly before she disappeared she lost her pension card and was supposed to go to Krolevets. She didn’t have her passport, which she had left with some friends in Konotop. He says Zhuravska often drank with her girlfriends and various men. After she disappeared, the raion police came several times to take witness statements, but they never found a trace of her.

Baranovsky only shrugs when he hears that Zhuravska somehow “revived” and wrote that letter on 4 April 2011 denouncing Krutsyk to the president of Ukraine himself. He says that she was never interested in such things and couldn’t have known anything about the Memorial Society, the Museum of Soviet Occupation, and Roman Krutsyk. Since there is no doubt that Zhuravska could not have written that letter, Kipiani and Krutsyk travel to Krolevets to see if they can find out something more from the police.

There they interviewed Andrii Trusenko, the head of the Criminal Investigation Department, who was involved in this missing person’s case from the very beginning. Trusenko confirms the disappearance in March 2008 of a female pensioner, who had an anti-social lifestyle. Inquiries were made at the morgue and psychiatric

hospitals in Sumy oblast as well as in neighbouring oblasts. The police wrote letters to Ivano-Frankivsk oblast, where Zhuravska was born, and still has a distant female relative. Zhuravska was not there.

Trusenko shows Kipiani and Krutsyk the bulletin board hung with posters of missing persons, including that of Zhuravska, who disappeared on 12 March 2008 and never returned. He added that recently someone from the regional prosecutor's office in the city of Sumy requested the Zhuravska case file and it was never returned.

Kipiani writes that, judging by everything, the letter denouncing Krutsyk was written by an individual who is clearly no longer alive.

The person or persons behind this letter are obviously those who are irritated by the existence of the Memorial Society in Kyiv and its dynamic curating and publishing activities. It is clear that Zhuravska became embroiled in this story by accident. The only question is: how did the anonymous denouncer know about the disappearance of this woman and have access to the exact information contained in her missing passport? Did they get this information, which has now disappeared, from the database of the Ministry of Internal Affairs?

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