

**REPRESSIONS OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE UAOC
IN CHERNIHIV REGION IN THE 1920S AND 1930S
(ACCORDING TO THE MATERIALS OF CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIVE CASES)**

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Summary

The purpose of this work is to analyze the repression of the clergy of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (hereinafter referred to as the UAOC) in Chernihiv Region. The main basis for the source-based analysis is criminal investigative cases from the Archive of the Security Service of Ukraine in Chernihiv region (hereinafter – the archive of the SSU in Chernihiv region), the Branch State Archive of the Security Service of Ukraine (hereinafter – BSA SSU) and the State Archive of Chernihiv region (hereinafter – SACR). The work presents a small historiographical excursion of the problem. The author analyzed the reasons for the persecution and pressure on representatives of the UAOC, described the socio-economic life of the clergy during the period of repression. Using the statistical method, the researcher establishes the age and national composition of repressed persons, their level of education and participation in military operations during the Civil War. The author cites the memories of priests, which, in turn, makes it possible to reconstruct their lives and activities during the period of repression. The article establishes the exact number of repressed archbishops and bishops of the UAOC in the region. With the help of various research methods, the peculiarities of falsification of criminal cases of the clergy are indicated. The article defines the types of punishments that were applied to representatives of the UAOC.

Key words: priest, bishop, archbishop, sentence, imprisonment, socio-economic life.

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1. Introduction

The representatives of the UAOC in the 1930s suffered from constant oppression and persecution by Soviet law enforcement authorities, as their goal was full independence from the Moscow Patriarchate. In their turn, the Soviet authorities considered this organization to be a center of national interest. In connection with open access to criminal investigation cases, the interest of researchers in this issue has increased significantly. S. I. Bilokin (1992), I. V. Bukhariyeva, V. M. Danylenko, V. M. Okipniuk (*Bukhariyeva, 2011*), I. Prelovska (2009) studied the repressed clergy of the UAOC. The formation and development of structural authorities (at the local level) and the activities of the representatives of the UAOC in the Chernihiv region were studied by: M. S. Tymoshyk (*Tymoshyk, 2016*) and A. A. Hlukhenkyi (2018, 2021). Today, there is no comprehensive work in which there would be a complete description of the repressed members of the UAOC of the Chernihiv region. Therefore, the aim of our research is a comprehensive characteristic of the repressed clergy of the UAOC in the Chernihiv region in the 1920s–1930s.

2. Sources and methods

The main source base for the study of this issue is the criminal investigation files of the Archive of the SSU in Chernihiv region, BSA SSU and SACR. In total, 100 criminal investigative cases were used in the study. To achieve the scientific aim of the research, we applied general scientific methods (system analysis, synthesis, induction, and deduction) and used a complex of special historical methods of scientific knowledge: comparison methods and a modeling method for the reconstruction of events.

3. Socio-economic situation of the representatives of the UAOC during mass repressions

Most of the priests of the UAOC in the Chernihiv region were Ukrainians – their age range was from 30 to 50 at the time of their arrest, which indicates that these individuals were of mature age and that their entry into the UAOC was a conscious decision. Moreover, some members of the UAOC participated in the Civil War of 1917–1922 on the side of the army of the Ukrainian National Republic (hereinafter – UNR). Therefore, Samuïl Pylypovych Vysoven was a priest in the village of Nosivka of the Chernihiv region who fought on the side of the Ukrainian National Republic during the Civil War (*Criminal case, p. 6323.: 45*), and from 1923 to 1929, he returned to religious activities in the ranks of the UAOC.

The priests and bishops of the UAOC were literate and educated people – usually spent their student years within the walls of the Chernihiv or Poltava theological seminaries. Since in the 1920s, the UAOC abolished the mandatory celibacy for bishops and put the moral side of the clergy in first place, the bishops officially could get married and have families. Nizhyn bishop Mykola Semenovych Shyrai was married to Anna Fedorivna Shyrai (*Khromova, 2022: 108*), who constantly appealed to the prosecutor with requests to release her husband. Celibacy did not concern priests, deacons, or archpriests – that is why priests could usually get married independently from parishes. During the analysis of the criminal and investigative cases, the origin of the representatives of the UAOC was established, which we have divided into three groups: those from clergy families, those from peasant families, and children of officials.

Priests had land plots that they inherited, but during imprisonment, the property was usually confiscated. According to the certificate of the village council from the village Martynivka of the Nizhyn district, the priest of the UAOC Dmytro Stepanovych Karpenko, before his arrest, owned 67 tithes of the land, a house, a threshing barn, and a shed, which were confiscated after his execution in 1938 (*Criminal case, 10927: 5*). However, in most of the cases, priests were dispossessed during collectivization and had a difficult financial situation.

In 1928, the priest of the UAOC Ivan Dykivskiy (Markivtsi village) reported in a letter of 1928 to Nizhyn and Chernihiv bishop Oleksandr Chervinskyi: «... I have already turned to tie my boots with a rope. It is embarrassing to show myself to people. Believe me, I haven't eaten bread or potatoes for several days. There is no life in the parish. The head of the church council refuses to fulfill his duties. But when he did work, he did not show any interest to anything. For nine months, there was not a single meeting of the church council. Those who could profit are indifferent. I do not see people with pride who stood for our mission. A kind of bacchanalia appeared with some limited quarrels and their consequences...» (*Yemelianov, 2011: 122*). From the content of the letter, it can be assumed that the funding of the UAOC was poor, and the implementation of the creation of religious communities was entirely on a public basis. The clergy could not stand absolute poverty and constant persecution and found themselves in other professions, renouncing their rank.

During the investigation, the UAOC priests gave testimony exclusively in the Ukrainian language, which indicates their strong civic position in which language and religion were integral components. In general, the UAOC priests performed religious rites only in Ukrainian.

Reconstructing the general portrait of a representative of the UAOC, it can be assumed that in the period of the late 1920s – early 1930s, the priest aged from 30 to 50 was Ukrainian and had a higher spiritual education. The priest's language of communication was exclusively Ukrainian. The UAOC priest kept family and moral values, that is why he was married, but his difficult financial situation forced him to find a part-time job at home (conducting private religious rites: baptizing a child or mourning the deceased) and, in critical cases, the priest renounced his rank and engaged in other professional activities.

Not only ordinary priests, but also protodeacons renounced their rank, as in 1928 due to constant arrests, baseless accusations, strong psychological pressure and personal worries for his own family – protodeacon of the UAOC, head of the All-Ukrainian Orthodox Church Council (hereinafter – the AOCC) – Vasyl Vasyliovych Potienko renounced the rank of priest and began working as an editor and proofreader in the «Literary Journal» (*Khromova, Yachmenikhin 2023: 80*).

4. Punishment and persecution

The persecution of the representatives of the UAOC in Ukraine began in the late 1920s. One of the first criminal cases in which a representative of the UAOC appeared as an accused was the case of the participants of the «...Union for the Freedom of Ukraine...». The trial took place over the 45 leaders and main figures of the Union for the Freedom of Ukraine in the building of the Opera House in Kharkiv from March 9 to April 19, 1930. All in all, 474 people were involved in the trial in 1930 – among them, there was the head of the AOCC Volodymyr Chekhivskyi, who was sentenced to 10 years in labor camps, and in 1937 he was shot.

The regional priests of the UAOC began to suffer from the Soviet machine much earlier. In 1926, Chernihiv archbishop Ivan Pavlovskyi was arrested. Together with other arrested bishops of the UAOC, he was taken to Kharkiv, and after his release, they took a signature not to leave the capital. In May 1936, the former archbishop of the Chernihiv region, Ivan Pavlovskyi, was arrested in Belhorod. On December 4, 1937, his case was considered in the Belhorod department of the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs (hereinafter – NKVD) of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic. In the record of the meeting of Triika of the NKVD administration of the Kursk region of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic dated December 9, 1937, it was recorded that I. Pavlovskyi «has repeatedly called for an organized protest for Ukraine's withdrawal from the USSR». For this «crime», he was sentenced to death and soon shot (*Hlukhenkyi, 2021: 38–39*).

In our opinion, the higher leadership of the UAOC, metropolitans and bishops, were persecuted and imprisoned first of all, as their positions were public and they played a major role in the management and control of district dioceses. S. I. Bilokin notes that during the period of repression, Stalin's regime killed about 30 bishops and more than 2,000 priests and believers (*Bilokin, 1992: 108*). Among the UAOC bishops who territorially belonged to the Chernihiv region, 9 people were repressed: Konotop bishops – Marko Hrushevskyi, Volodymyr Samborskyi, Hryhorii Mozolevskyi; Nizhyn bishops – Mykola Semenovych Shyrai, Oleksandr Chervinskyi; Pryluky Archbishop Feodosii Seriiiev and bishop Konon Bei; Chernihiv archbishops Yurii Mikhnovskyi and Ivan Pavlovskyi. Among these bishops and archbishops, only two were sent into exile – the others were shot.

It is not possible to establish the exact number of the repressed UAOC priests in the Chernihiv region since not every criminal case mentions the priest's affiliation to the church, and there are also cases when the priest changed his religious beliefs and transferred from one church to another during his life. Also, not every criminal case contains the registration card of a «cult minister», which usually contained information about religious affiliation and, since 1928, information about renunciation of the rank.

According to the verdicts in criminal cases, we distinguish two types of punishment against UAOC activists: 1) exile in labor camps for 1 to 10 years; 2) execution.

For example, the UAOC bishop Oleksandr Chervynskiy, who in 1926 was elected as a bishop of the Nizhyn and Chernihiv districts, was arrested in Vynytsia in 1934. According to some information, he was exiled to Central Asia (*Hlukhenkyi, 2021*).

In 1930, according to Article 54–10 of the Criminal Code of the Ukrainian SSR, the priest of the UAOC Ivan Ivanovych Dmytryk was sentenced to 3 years of imprisonment in the Northern Territory, despite the fact that he participated in the Civil War on the side of the Red Army (*Criminal case. p. 9902: 54*).

Priest Mitrofan Yakovych Kohan was imprisoned for 5 years because of his affiliation with the UAOC. He was also a secret agent of the Regional Office of the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs, as evidenced by the certificate. It is stated in the case that he gave false testimony to the perpetrators of the administration, which is why he was convicted (*Criminal case. p. 16606: 21*).

Priest D. S. Karpenko was sentenced to execution. He was constantly accused of counter-revolutionary activities and was under arrest for a long time. According to the certificate, which was issued by the Martyniv village council, D. S. Karpenko was a kulak in terms of property and had a close connection with the archbishops of the UAOC. According to the decision of the Triika of the Chernihiv Regional Administration dated 27.12.1937, D. S. Karpenko was shot on 02.01.1938 (*Criminal case, 10927*).

All cases of the UAOC activists were falsified in order to speed up the process of liquidation of the UAOC in the country. In our opinion, the fabricated elements were:

- 1) the signatures of the defendant are not clear;
- 2) identical answers of witnesses;
- 3) permanent rejection of cassation appeals of the defendants;

The judicial system was built in such a way that the defendant could not defend himself and his interests in court. During the arrest, methods of intimidation were used, sometimes beatings.

To sum up, it can be stated that the main reasons for the persecution of the UAOC activists by NKVD were the priests' participation in the Civil War of 1917–1921 on the side of the UNR, their possession of land and their active civic position.

5. Conclusions

Thus, the UAOC clergy came under the eye of the special services, as it was considered by the Soviet authorities as a national organization. The ideas and program principles proclaimed by the UAOC were democratic, and the separation from the Moscow Patriarchate and the transition to exclusively Ukrainian language in church services caused concern among the party leadership. On the territory of the Chernihiv region, the UAOC existed from 1921 to the mid-1930s as part of 4 dioceses, whose representatives were constantly persecuted and suffered from long terms of punishment. In most cases, the clergy of the UAOC in the Chernihiv region

were shot, and their property was confiscated. Overall, the Soviet leadership tried to destroy the best representatives of the UAOC because they carried the Ukrainian language and culture to the masses.

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