
Probe launched into Waffen-SS Latvian Legion veteran suspected of Nazism vindication



The Main Investigations Directorate of the Investigative Committee of Russia has launched a probe into a citizen of the Republic of Latvia, Visvaldis Latsis. He is suspected of committing a crime under Article 354.1 of the Criminal Code of Russia (vindication of Nazism).

In 2017, veteran of the Waffen-SS Latvian Legion Visvaldis Latsis republished the book “The Latvian Legion in the Light of Truth” in Riga. As a former member of this Legion, in the book he endorsed and supported the punitive activity of military personnel in the territories of the Byelorussian SSR, Pskov, Leningrad, and Novgorod regions occupied during the Second World War. In such a way the author justified the war crimes against civilians committed by police battalions that had been part of the Latvian Legion.

The investigators believe that Latsis intended to form the public perception of the non-involvement

of the Latvian Legion military personnel in the crimes established by the verdict of the International Military Tribunal in order to exempt the Latvian Legion from the Tribunal's standards.

In accordance with the verdict of the International Military Tribunal, the Waffen-SS organization had been an active participant in the commission of war crimes and crimes against humanity: these formations had been involved in widespread killing and mistreatment of civilians in the occupied territories. The Waffen-SS unit had been recognized as a criminal one, while it is hardly possible to name any unit of Waffen-SS that had not been involved in criminal activity.

In 1943 and 1944, in the occupied territory of the USSR, formations that had been part of the Latvian Legion had carried out punitive operations known as "Winter Magic" and "Spring Festival". These facts are confirmed by historical documents and witness testimonies. Hundreds of villages and thousands of civilians had been killed by the Latvian police battalions, which, in accordance with Article 6 of the Charter of the International Military Tribunal for the prosecution and punishment of the major war criminals of the European Axis, are classified as war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The work of the Investigative Committee on the probes into a vindication of Nazism is especially important and relevant today, amid regular attempts to rewrite history. The wish of certain individuals to distort the outcome of the Second World War and to glorify war criminals must be actively and severely suppressed. The Investigative Committee will continue to work to identify such facts, providing each with a legal assessment.

Video link: <https://youtu.be/1x5gj-fCy6g>

Official spokesperson for the Investigative Committee of Russia S. Petrenko

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