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Artists in Latvia under the Nazi Occupation. War, Occupation and Power

Keywords: art museums in Latvia, art and power, cartoons, newspaper *Tēviņa*, Nazi occupation in Latvia, posters, Vilhelms Purvītis, Ernests Rirdāns, Second World War, Stalin.

Between 1942 and the summer of 1944, military action took place in the depths of Russia, and life in Nazi-occupied Latvia was relatively calm. Considering the huge amount of works of art created in Latvia in this period, the various paintings (landscapes, still lifes, portraits, and to a lesser degree genre paintings), graphic art (prints, cartoons, book illustrations¹), and the illustrated books on art and art criticism published at the time, it may give the impression of a fairly harmonious and fully fledged artistic life in the occupied country. Surprisingly, private and state patronage of art also existed. This can be illustrated by the activities of provincial museums, in particular the Tukums Municipal Art Museum, which was established in 1936 by the painter Leonīds Āriņš (1907–1991). The Tukums Municipal Art Museum continued to operate without changes during the war, while Latvia's main art museums in Riga were forced to interrupt their activities because of reorganisations, performed first by the Soviets (from the autumn of 1940 till the summer of 1941), and later by the Nazis. Another provincial art museum in Talsi amassed a small art collection with support from the Latvian Culture Foundation and the local municipality. During the war, a museum in the remote Irlava village was established at the initiative of Krišjānis Katlavs, a local doctor and art lover. Farmers and peasants would pay him for medical treatment in food products, like butter, milk or meat,

¹ During the war, despite the lack of paper, when books were rarely published in hardcover, Latvian book illustration flourished, especially works by the woodcut artists Jānis Plēpis (1909–1947), Oļģerts Ābelīte (1909–1972) and Aleksandrs Junkers (1899–1976).

which in wartime had a much greater value than money. Katlaps acquired many pictures by exchanging food products for them. Not only Irlava's art museum, but also other provincial Latvian museums expanded their collections during the war.

It should be noted that in the years of the postwar Soviet occupation, it was strictly forbidden to exhibit artworks that had been created in Nazi-occupied Latvia. Museums did not acquire them either. Therefore, artists often altered the dates on their paintings. Obviously, in the Soviet period, it was impossible to reproduce wartime artworks in art books or critical reviews. The same can be said about artworks by émigré artists who fled to the West from the approaching Red Army, leaving behind works that later found their way into Latvian museums. For instance, this happened with the artistic property of Kārlis Neilis (1906–1991) that was left in his studio in Tukums, and the paintings by Margarita Stīpniece (1910–2010) which remained in her apartment in Talsi. There are other similar examples.

The relatively few creative restrictions in the period of the Nazi occupation might explain the fact that not many portraits of Adolf Hitler and other Nazi leaders, and a rather small amount of works reflecting the events of the war, such as the battles of Latvian legionaries on the Eastern front, were created by Latvian artists. They continued to work in the same style as they did before, solving formal tasks, and the styles of individual artists could be clearly distinguished from each other, despite the fact that examples of the new German art were widely promoted as icons of the future common style. In other words, the situation was different from the one that existed in postwar Soviet Latvia, when many painters were deemed formalists incapable of following the only direction of Socialist Realism, as they were working in slightly different ways. This becomes even more obvious when compared with the artistic scene in Latvia under Kārlis Ulmanis' authoritarian regime in the second half of the 1930s. It was a time when modernist aspirations were silenced, and the idea of the newborn nation-state was promoted through Neo-Traditionalism, offering the public realistic images of country life and the glorification of historic events.

In the years of the Second World War, the fine arts, little affected by censorship by the Nazi regime, as well as theatre and literature, were in high demand by both the local public and the Germans: theatres were full, and newly printed books were difficult to obtain. Art served as a substitute for many things that were unavailable under the harsh wartime conditions.

The deliberate and skilfully organised German cultural policy was silent about the future geopolitical plans of the German Reich, and made known to Latvian society all the violence and atrocities that the Soviets committed in Latvia in 1940 and 1941. A quotation from a speech by Otto Heinrich Drechsler, the commissioner general for Latvia, at the opening of the first large wartime exhibition of fine arts in Riga in early 1942 may give an impression of how this was done. The speech, probably given in the aftermath of the failed *Blitzkrieg* (the German army was stopped by the Soviets near Moscow), revealed a departure from the tendency that was characteristic of the first months of Latvia's occupation to disassociate German art from the accomplishments of 'this country's' artists, proving how naïve the hope that the Germans would help to restore the independent Latvian state was. He reminded people that they should be grateful for the opportunity to hold this exhibition to 'the heroic armed forces of Germany that liberated this city from the power of Bolshevism last summer and have built living ramparts in the East fulfilling their iron duty'.² However, the goal of the Germans was to 'foster and develop the cultural and artistic life of this country on the broadest scale'.³ Here, he probably meant the Ostland, the eastern region of the German Reich, which included Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and the western part of Byelorussia. It is characteristic that Drechsler avoided saying 'Latvia' or 'the Latvians'.

Ironically enough, it seems typical that if the Soviet invaders emphasised the fruitful influence of Russian culture on the revival of Latvian culture, the Germans also accentuated the beneficial effect of German

² Māksliniekam jāatveido savas tautas un zemes pamatvērtības (The Artist Must Portray the Basic Values of his Nation and his Homeland), *Tēvija*, 22 January 1942, p. 1.

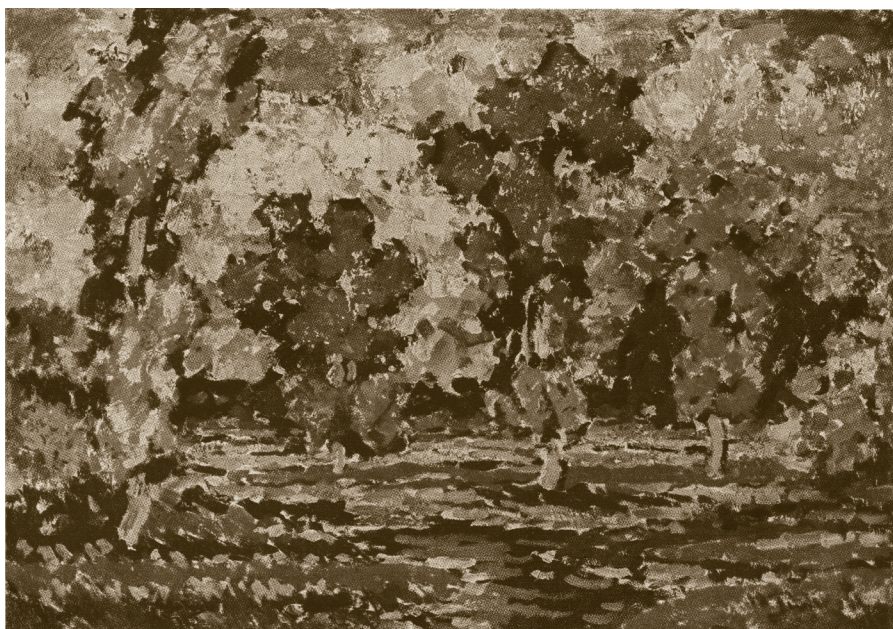
³ *Ibid.*

culture. 'I do not have to underline the fact that we also have a great interest in the art of this country, which surprisingly has a lot in common with our German districts.'⁴ In addition, Drechsler quite clearly indicated the different directions that Latvian artists should follow, instead of their modernist aspirations, apparently without much difficulty (not suggesting they look for examples in Paris or Rome), and formulated requirements that were not strict, but similar to the ones characteristic of German art of that time. He claimed the importance of 'building on the art traditions of one's country and deriving one's roots from soil and blood, to pave new ways for an agriculturally driven and serious art', adding that 'this endeavour has brought tangible success, and, in my opinion, we have to do everything to help these artists, who thanks to their sense of responsibility, their ability to create, and their craftsmen's skills, convey the call to fulfil, waken and depict artistically the core values dormant in every people and their land.'⁵

During the war, Latvian culture experienced a rebirth not only in Riga, the centre of Ostland, but also in smaller towns. The fine arts scene in Nazi-occupied Latvia was very lively. Private art salons opened not only in Riga, but also in Cēsis, Jelgava and Liepāja. German soldiers who bought views of Riga as souvenirs also helped to invigorate the art market. Censors were not particularly strict, so art exhibitions, in addition to realist works, contained pictures that in Germany would probably be considered as degenerate art, such as the Expressionist paintings by Vilhelms Purvītis (1872–1945) in his 70th birthday exhibition in 1942 (Fig. 1). Purvītis was the father of the Latvian national landscape, the founder and for a long time the rector of the Latvian Academy of Art, and the head of its landscape studio. It should be noted that he collected his works, planning to establish a private museum. Most of the collected items were transported from Riga in 20 boxes shortly before the return of the Soviet army at the end of the Second World War. The further fate of the collection remains unknown. The transport of the works may

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.



1. Vilhelms Purvītis. *Autumn Trees*. 1930s

have been caused by a decisive coincidence: from 1906 to 1909, the years that Purvītis spent in Tallinn (then Reval), among his pupils at the local Realschool was a talented draughtsman, Alfred Rosenberg (1893–1946), who later became one of the main authors of Nazi ideology, and the head of the Reich Ministry for Ostland. It was one of the greatest losses to Latvian culture during the Second World War. The only greater loss was the flight and migration to the West of the majority of most talented artists in the summer and autumn of 1944, which together with the Soviet occupation interrupted the natural development of Latvian art.

During the war, most senior Latvian artists had almost no problems in choosing the form and theme of their works. Certainly, more personal artworks embodying the greatest artistic freedom and directly depicting the reality of daily life (by Jānis Tamužs, 1896–1991, Kārlis Eglītis,

2. Kārlis Eglītis. A drawing from 26 September 1944



3. Leonīds Āriņš. A drawing from 29 January 1945



1906–1950, Leonīds Āriņš, and Jānis Pauļuks, 1906–1984) were not offered for exhibition, and remained in the artists' studios and portfolios (Figs. 2, 3). Both artists who drew cartoons and posters and younger art students who were drafted into the army faced a more difficult situation. The latter had to perform the duties of war correspondents specified by the propagandist press. However, in addition to posters on war-related themes that urged people to economise and comply with hygiene require-

ments, and which spread fear of the enemy, or made traditional announcements of mobilisation, other works were created, such as the poster *Hands off Latvia!* by Kurts Fridrihsons (1911–1991) (Fig. 4), which emphasised the tragic situation of the Latvian nation towards the end of the war. Recruitment announcements were made in early 1943, when the Latvian Legion was established at the order of Adolf Hitler. In the meantime, war correspondents not only made testimonies of the bravery of German and Latvian soldiers, but also sought to illustrate the drama of



4. Kurts Fridrihsons. *Hands off Latvia!* 1944

warfare and the postwar prospects. For example, drawings (among them *Help! (Gloomy Faces)*, *Colours of Misery* and *Hard Times for the Fatherland*) by Juris Soikans (1920–1995), an undergraduate at the Latvian Academy of Art, had a more subtle form and a more general content (Fig. 5).



5. Juris Soikans. *Help! (Gloomy Faces)*. October 1944



6. Reinis Birzgalis. *Writer and Statesman*. Vilis Lācis' caricature from the series *The Honoured Ones* (caption: 'Vilis Lācis, who encouraged the Bolsheviks to kill Latvians, in his own words wrote the novels "in the underground resistance", making enough income for just one luxurious villa and "dying of hunger", earned about 10,000 lats a year'). 1941

These drawings were made in the autumn of 1944 in Kurzeme, in the west of Latvia, which at that time was still under German rule, not yet seized by Soviet forces.

Cartoons, which had gone into decline in the second half of the 1930s because of restrictions imposed by Ulmanis' regime, experienced a revival during the war and the German occupation. Cartoons and posters are seldom regarded as being on a par with the fine arts, because in cartoons and caricatures, the message has to be simple and easy to read, which means a greater amount of direct propaganda and less involvement of the personal imagination. These limitations were especially obvious during the war, when public art had a strict thematic and artistic orientation. The situation was slightly different in Latvia and the other Baltic States, Estonia and Lithuania, which incidentally are the only states that were occupied three times during the Second World War. Cartoons can

also be considered a valuable visual source for the interpretation of historical events, and an embodiment of Nazi propaganda, as the Latvian historian Dmitrijs Oļehnovičs has noted.⁶

Cartoonists not only made anti-Semitic works that pleased the Nazis, but also depicted local political figures who had behaved as puppets during the Soviet regime, showing how naïve their hopes were and how communist propaganda differed from its actions. The series *The Honoured Ones* (Fig. 6) and *A Short Course in History* by the actor and cartoonist Reinis Birzgalis (1907–1990) could be mentioned as examples. As the end of the war was approaching, cartoonists became very afraid of the atrocities of the ‘liberating’ Soviet army; see, for example, *When Danger is Near* by A. Zandis, probably a pseudonym of Aleksandrs Krūka (1898–1987). It might be presumed that, if it was Nazi propaganda, it could not be true. In fact, things were not so simple.

To explain the situation, a few words should be said about Ernests Rirdāns (1901–1954, true name Rirdancis), the most popular Latvian prewar and wartime cartoonist and newspaper satirical illustrator. He studied at the Latvian Academy of Art, and from the late 1920s his cartoons on Latvia’s domestic politics and urgent topics were published in the magazines *Svari* (Scales), *Vecais Sikspārnis* (Old Bat), *Aizsargs* (the magazine of the Latvian paramilitary organisation), the newspapers *Brīvā Zeme* (Free Land), *Latvis* (The Latvian), *Rīts* (Morning), and others.

He developed a distinct and not very harsh style, which influenced some of the cartoonists who worked in postwar Latvia. After the war, the Latvian émigré poet Teodors Tomsons characterised him as a man to whom God had given a sense of humour that manifested itself similarly in his drawings, writings and conversations with his friends.⁷

⁶ D. Oļehnovičs, *Karikatūra kā ‘kara ierocis’: dažas tendences nacionālsociālistiskajā propagandā* (Caricature as a ‘Weapon of War’. Some Tendencies in Nazi Propaganda), *Latvijas Vēsturnieku komisijas raksti*, vol. 11: *Latvija nacistiskās Vācijas okupācijas varā. 1941–1945*, Rīga, 2004, pp. 30–40.

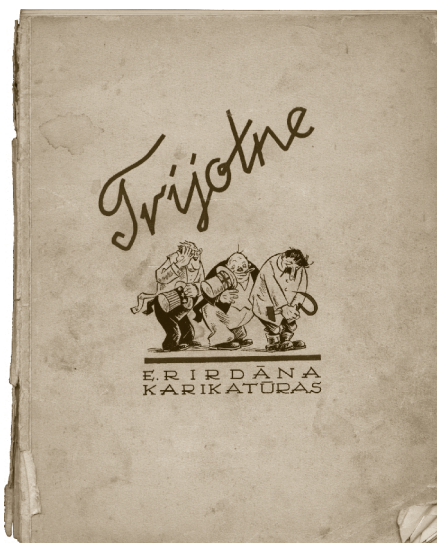
⁷ T. Tomsons, *Kliedziens: vecie avīzraksti* (Scream: Articles from Old Newspapers), Sidneja, 1988, p. 15.



7. Ernests Rirdāns. *Warm Things Come with Heating, Good Things with Waiting* (caption: 'Several cases of intoxication with adulterated vodka were found' and 'Peace from all activities'). 1942

In almost the entire period of the German occupation, Rirdāns drew cartoons for *Tēvija* (The Fatherland, editions of 280,000 copies were printed), the most popular wartime newspaper, which was published in Latvia and acted as the mouthpiece of the occupying authorities. It was monitored and censored by the Propaganda Section of the Ostland Reichskommissariat, which decided the themes of the issues, the terminology to be used, and the material to be published.⁸ During the war, more than 400 cartoons appeared in the newspaper. Although some of them were taken from the German press, the majority of the cartoons were drawn by Rirdāns. He drew not only political cartoons, but also scenes of social life, for example, depicting the need to economise on resources (*Jānis Negals Saves Electricity*, a play on words, as the surname Negals means 'misfor-

⁸ К. Зеллис, Д. Олехнович, Карикатура в газете *Tēvija* 1941–1945 г. г.: некоторые вопросы источниковедческой критики (Cartoons in the Newspaper *Tēvija* in 1941–1945: Some Issues of Bibliographical Criticism), *Daugavpils Universitātes Humanitāro zinātņu vēstnesis*, vol. 7, 2005, p. 80.



8. Ernests Rirdāns. The cover of the cartoon collection *Trijotne* (The Threesome). 1942

tune' in Latvian), or the harm done by the production of illegal alcohol (*Warm Things Come with Heating, Good Things with Waiting*) (Fig. 7). It is not known to what extent he was free to choose the topics of his cartoons, whether they were proposed to him or if he could choose them himself, but one thing is clear: it was a matter of mutual agreement. His cartoons definitely guaranteed him a fairly stable income: from 1943 to 1944 he earned between 110 and 340 reichsmarks a month.⁹ The salary of the sculptor

Kārlis Jansons, who was an assistant professor at the Art Academy, was 340 reichsmarks a month in 1942 (a kilogram of rye bread cost 0.14 reichsmarks, a litre of milk 0.13/0.14 reichsmarks, a kilogram of bacon 1.20 reichsmarks, a kilogram of potatoes 0.34/0.35 reichsmarks). Cartoons by Rirdāns were also published in other wartime periodicals: *Laikmets* (The Epoch), *Hallo, Latvija* (Hello, Latvia), *Humorists* (The Humorist) and *Daugavas Vanagi* (Daugava Hawks). His cartoons also appeared in the propaganda publication *Latviešu atbilde žīdiem un boļševikiem* (A Latvian Response to Jews and Bolsheviks; issues 1–3, 1943–1944; each published with a print run of 50,000 copies), a collection of various responses to the Soviet propaganda broadcast on the Latvian Radio programme 'Nedēļas atbalss' (Echo of the Week).

Some of the cartoons by Rirdāns published in *Tēvija* were included in the collection *Trijotne* (The Threesome) (Fig. 8), which was published

⁹ Ibid., p. 83.

both in Latvian and in German with quite a large circulation. While assessing the achievements of the ‘cleverest and most gifted Latvian cartoonist’ of that time ‘who makes drawings without much effort, making only mental drafts of comic and grotesque situations’, the painter and art historian Oļģerts Saldavs (1907–1960) focused less on the political and propaganda content, but made a surprising and precise statement that ‘Rirdāns’ art is hidden in the kind-hearted, humorously grotesque element characteristic of Latvians.’¹⁰

Latvian cartoonists at that time who often used pseudonyms seldom talked about their work. Rirdāns is an exception when he said that in his cartoons he tried to document his times and developments.

Because, friends, I cannot do otherwise. The ‘gods of war’, ‘lions’, ‘plutocrats’ and ‘fathers of nations’, as well as the events of our time, are so unique that they will not be repeated for thousands of years. Therefore, it would be a sin not to perpetuate them in this collection, so to speak, as a warning to later generations.¹¹

He also noted that his cartoon character prototypes tried to win him over by various means. ‘I do not want to boast; however, I also cannot pass over the fact that prior to the publication of the collection I was tempted many times.’ Rirdāns had a dream that Stalin joined the Church and confessed his sins, Roosevelt promised him the best Freemasons’ lodge with central heating, a lift and a bath, and Churchill tried to bribe him with a box of cigars, a bottle of whisky, and half of the Island of Waikiki after the war.¹²

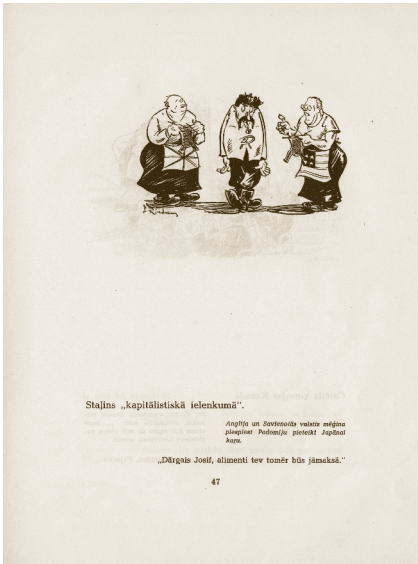
Among the more than 70 cartoons by Rirdāns, there are several with anti-Semitic tones (*A Sure Thing* and *So Vanishes the Glory of the World*). Historians who made a statistical analysis of the cartoons published in *Tēvija* were surprised to find that only a comparatively small part of them have an anti-Semitic character.¹³ Although the title of the collection *Trijotne* (The Threesome) implied that the object of irony

¹⁰ O. Saldavs, Ernesta Rirdāna ‘Trijotne’ (‘The Threesome’ by Ernests Rirdāns), *Tēvija*, 26 January 1942, p. 8.

¹¹ E. Rirdāns, *Trijotne* (The Threesome), Rīga, 1942, p. 5.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 5–6.

¹³ Зелис, Олехнович, *op. cit.*



9. Ernests Rirdāns. *Stalin under Capitalist Siege* (caption: 'England and the United States try to convince the Soviets to declare war on Japan. Dear Joseph, nonetheless you must pay your alimony'). From the collection *Trījotne* ('The Three-some'). 1942

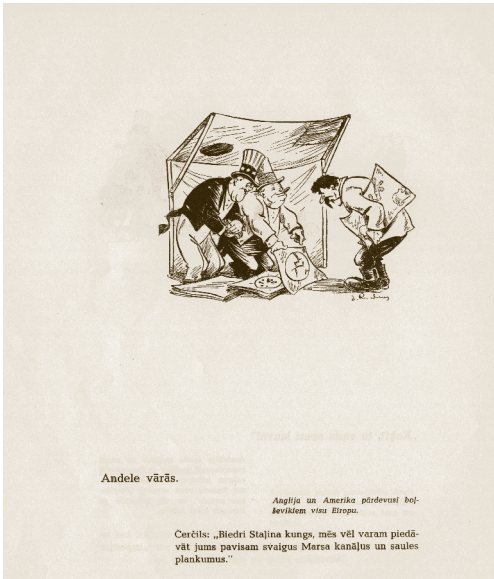
was the anti-Hitler coalition, its main targets were Stalin's violence against his own people (*This Sure has to be Defended* and *Shiny Prospects of the Future*), Stalin's maniacal fear (*Stalin Leads* and *It will be the Last Battle*), and the fear of the spread of communism (*Incubator of Communism*).

The second key theme of Rirdāns' cartoons is the incompatible partners and cooperation problems of the anti-Hitler coalition (*Stalin under Capitalist Siege* (Fig. 9), *Only for You, Fair Ladies, Joint Action, Effective Help from England and By Joint Forces*).

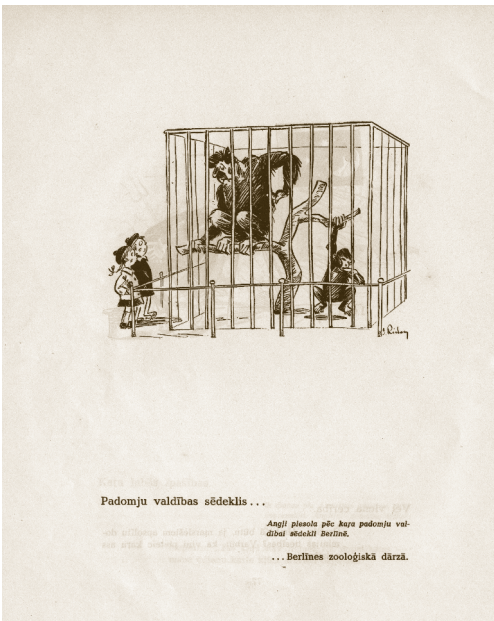
Expressive drawing, strong compositions, easily recognisable characters, and ridicule and

derision heaped on politicians and officials are all characteristic features of Rirdāns' cartoons. All this is often emphasised by using Latvian proverbs, lines from various songs, and colloquial vocabulary.

However, these cartoons cannot be considered as distortions of reality only because they were used by Nazi propaganda. On the contrary, they show openly various crucial events of the mid-20th century, revealing the predatory aims of the Soviets that sparked the Winter War against Finland (*Guardian of the Weak and the Suppressed*), the atrocities by the Soviets who killed hundreds of Polish army officers (*Do not Mind Your own Business*), and the irony of the fact that at Teheran and Yalta, the USA and Great Britain silently allowed Stalin to invade the Baltic States and a large part of Central and



10. Ernests Rirdāns. *The Deal is On* (caption: ‘England and America sold all of Europe to the Bolsheviks. Churchill: Comrade Sir Stalin we can even offer you fresh craters on Mars, canals and the Sun’s spots’). From the the collection *Trijotne* (The Threesome). 1942



11. Ernests Rirdāns. *The Seat of the Soviet Government... in Berlin Zoo* (caption: ‘The Brits offer the Soviet Government a seat in Berlin’). From the collection *Trijotne* (The Threesome). 1942



Josifs: „Varbūt, ka tāds es labāk
patīku vāciešiem!”

Yosiph: “ Perhaps the Germans will
like me better like that.”

12. Ernests Rirdāns. A cartoon from the book *Good Uncle Joe in Pictures* (caption: ‘Joseph: Perhaps the Germans will like me better like that’). 1949

Eastern Europe which was struggling with the Nazis (*The Deal is On* (Fig. 10) and *An Unwanted Guest*)¹⁴.

It is not known if Rirdāns and his family suffered from Soviet repressions in 1940 and 1941. This experience encouraged many Latvians to welcome the German occupation at the very beginning. Obviously, Rirdāns was not at all happy about the Soviets and their regime, which was the reason for his popularity among Latvian readers of *Tēvija*.

Had he remained in Latvia, Rirdāns would probably have been executed. Just one of his caricatures depicting ‘the treason of the great homeland’ (*The Seat of the Soviet Government... in Berlin Zoo*) (Fig. 11) would have been enough for that. However, he managed to escape and settled in England, where, as far as is known, he did not experience any difficul-

¹⁴ The latter was included in the 3rd issue (1944) of the propaganda publication *Latviešu atbilde žīdiem un boļševikiem raidījumā “Nedēļas atbals”* (A Latvian Response to Jews and Bolsheviks on the Radio programme ‘Echo of the Week’).

ties as a former contributor to Nazi culture in occupied Latvia. During the Cold War, when the friendship between the winners of the Second World War came to an end, he published the series of cartoons *Tētiņš Josifs Rirdāna zīmējums/Good Uncle Joe in Pictures* (with captions in Latvian and English) in 1949, and *Uncle Joe* (in English) in 1952, at his own expense, addressed to only one person of 'the threesome', Joseph Stalin, 'the father of all nations', whom he compared to Hitler (Fig. 12).

I would like to end my paper with the conclusion that a simple explanation of an artist's motivation in creating works conforming totally to Nazi propaganda is not possible: could it be only for bread-winning reasons, political naivety, or obeying an employer's demands? These works were passed over in silence by their authors in postwar Latvia, and unwillingly remembered in exile. Nevertheless, when assessing the political cartoons and posters created by Latvian artists, we can claim that there might have been some cases when the personal beliefs of artists coincided with the objectives of Nazi propaganda, to a large extent illustrating the difficult and unchanging situation of finding oneself in the sphere of interest of two aggressive totalitarian regimes.

J ā n i s K a l n a č i s

Dailininkas nacių okupuotoje Latvijoje. Karas, okupacija, valdžia

Santrauka

Apžiūrėjus nacių okupacijos laikais sukurtus Latvijos dailės kūrinius – peizažus, natūrmortus, portretus, taip pat kiek rečiau pasitaikančius žanrinius paveikslus, knygų iliustracijas, knygas apie dailę ir dailės kritikos straipsnius, galima pagalvoti, kad karo metais šalyje vyko ramus visavertis dailės gyvenimas.

Vokietijos kultūros politika okupuotose Rytų teritorijose buvo apgalvota ir gerai organizuota, ypač palyginus su sovietų brutaliais plėšimais ir naikinimu.

Žinoma, nemažai individualius meninius ieškojimus ir kūrybos laisvę įkūnijančių kūrinių (pavyzdžiui, Jānio Tamužio (1896–1991), Kārlio Eglīčio (1906–1950), Leonīdo Āriņšio (1907–1991), Jānio Pauļuko (1906–1984) paveikslai) nepatekdavo į parodas ir likdavo dailininkų dirbtuvėse. Tačiau dar sunkiau buvo karikatūrų ir plakatų autoriams bei jauniems dailės studentams, mobilizuotiems į kariuomenę. Pastariesiems tekdavo propagandinei spaudai tarnaujančių karo korespondentų vaidmuo. Propagandai tarnavo taip pat ir karikatūrų piešėjai bei plakatinkai. Vis dėlto net tarp karo tematikos plakatų esama kūrinių, išreiškusių Latvijos tautą ištikusią tragediją. Lygiai taip pat ir dailininkai karo korespondentai, vykde užduotį įamžinti vokiečių ir latvių kareivių drąsą, stengėsi užfiksuoti ir karo metų bei karo pabaigos dramą. Tokio atvejo pavyzdys – dailininko Jurio Soikānio Kuržemės piešiniai, sukurti 1944 m. rudenį. Karikatūristai ne tik kūrė antisemitinius piešinius nacių pageidavimu, bet taip pat nukreipė savo ironiją į vietines marionetes, tarnavusias sovietams, vaizdavo skirtumą tarp sovietų pažadų bei veiksmų. Artėjant karo pabaigai, karikatūristai gąsdino sovietų armijos „išvaduotojos“ žiaurybės.

Didžiausiu tiražu karo metais leistas Latvijos laikraštis buvo vokiečių okupantų valdžios organas *Tēvija* (Tėvynė). Daugumą jame paskelbtų karikatūrų nupiešė dailininkas Ernestas Rirdānas (1901–1954) – populiariausias prieskario Latvijos ir karo metų karikatūristas. Dalis jo karo metų darbų pateko į rinkinį *Trijotne* („Trejetukas“), publikuotą latvių ir vokiečių kalba ir išleistą dideliu tiražu. Karikatūristas tvirtino mėginęs užfiksuoti savo epochos įvykius ir jų raidą, tačiau rinkinio pavadinimas nurodo, kad pagrindinis jo ironijos taikinytis buvo antihitlerinė koalicija, visų pirma koalicijos nario Stalino vidaus ir išorės politika, nukreipta prieš savo piliečius, jo maniakiška baimė ir pastangos įtvirtinti bei kuo plačiau skleisti komunizmą. Nepaisant, kad Rirdāno karikatūros buvo kuriamos nacių propagandos užsakymu, jų tiesos negalima atmesti. Ypač svarbūs darbai, skirti Sovietų Sąjungos ir Suomijos Žiemos karui, sovietų susidorojimui su Lenkijos Respublikos karininkais, Baltijos

šalių ir nemažos Europos dalies priskyrimui sovietų įtakos zonai, tyliai pritarus JAV ir Didžiajai Britanijai.

Po karo Rirdānas įsikūrė Anglijoje. Čia šaltojo karo metais savo lėšomis išleido karikatūrų rinkinius „Gerasis dėdė Džo paveikslėliuose“ (1949) ir „Dėdė Džo“ (1952), kurių pagrindinis veikėjas buvo vienas iš „Trejetuko“ – „visų tautų tėvas“ Josifas Stalinas, kurį jis išdrįso prilyginti Hitleriui.

Vertinant karo metų latvių dailininkų karikatūras ir plakatus, reikėtų pripažinti, kad netrūko atvejų, kada užsakovų – nacių propagandistų – ir atlikėjų – latvių dailininkų – pažiūros ir tikslai sutapdavo. Tai skatintų plačiau komentuoti tokios situacijos priežastis.