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Janka Kaškiel: An Accomplice in Crimes or the Victim of Two Dictatorships? The Fate of a Caricaturist in the Service of the Stalinist and Nazi Regimes

Keywords: anti-Bolshevism, anti-semitism, Belarusian nationalism, caricature, collaboration, occupation, Second World War.

In memory of Vital Skalaban, who introduced me to the topic and provided some valuable advice.

Twentieth-century history is still a battlefield for fierce ideological struggles. This is true of Belarus to an even greater extent than of neighbouring countries. Academic freedom inside state-run scientific institutions is quite limited. Many topics are unofficially considered undesirable for research, and researchers either avoid them or have to fit their conclusions into predetermined boundaries, to serve the state ideology (or at least not to contradict it). In contemporary Belarus, the state ideology exists officially, and is taught in universities and vocational schools. One of the cornerstones of the state ideology lies in the history of the Second World War. The period from 22 June 1941 to 9 May 1945 is called the Great Patriotic War, and various historical myths about the war have been created and are still alive. According to one of these myths, all Soviet (or Belarusian) people stood up as one entity to fight the Nazis.

During the times of the USSR, it was dangerous simply to have any books, newspapers or magazines published legally under the German occupation, regardless of their content. People burnt such publications, in an effort to avoid problems with the state security apparatus.¹

So it is completely normal that artistic life during the Nazi occupation was not researched in the times of the USSR. In the synthetic

¹ Ю. Туронак, *Беларуская кніга пад нямецкім кантролем (1939–1944)* (Belarusian Book Printing under German Control. 1939–1944), Мінск, 2002, pp. 3–4.

collective art history of Belarus, the years of the Second World War are described in such a way that one may get the impression that all Belarusian artists were either on the Soviet home front, or fighting on the battlefields, or had joined the partisan forces, and that no artistic life at all was possible under the occupation.² During the 1990s, some memoirs and journalistic research on the period were published. They revealed that the situation was in fact different to what people had been used to thinking, but the subject is still far from being fully covered.

Collaboration with the Nazis in Belarus, in general, is well-researched. But information about artists who collaborated (or even artists who just lived under the Nazi occupation) is very scarce.

The artist Jaŭhien Cichanovič (1911–2005) was quite detailed in his memoirs when describing the occupation and artists' survival strategies.³ The artist couple Mikalaj Paškevič (1907–2003) and his wife Ona Dokalskaitė-Paškevičienė (Halina Dakalskaja-Paškevič, 1912–1999), a painter of Lithuanian origin, received some attention thanks to an exhibition of their paintings in 1993 in the State Art Museum of Belarus.⁴ The story of artists in Slonim under the Nazi occupation was told by the journalist Siarhiej Čyhryn.⁵

We should remember that information about various artists' lives during the occupation may be found in memoirs about the anti-fascist resistance. For example, Hersh Smolar, in his book on the Minsk ghetto, tells the story of the participation by the sculptor Abram Brazer (1892–1942) in the ghetto's underground resistance, and his tragic end.⁶

² *Гісторыя беларускага мастацтва* (A History of Belarusian Art), vol. 5 (from 1941 to the 1960s), Мінск, 1992, p. 5.

³ Я. Ціхановіч, *Успаміны* (Memoirs), *Полацак*, 1991, nos. 6-7, 8, 9, 10; 1992, no. 1 (11).

⁴ Л. Крушинская, «Мы доўга чакалі, пакуль Сталін не памёр...» (We had been Waiting so Long for Stalin to Die ...), *Культура*, 5 July 1993. See also: *The Art of Ona Dokalskaitė-Paškevičienė*, ed. by A. Kezys, Chicago, 1993.

⁵ С. Чыгрын, *Мастак Антон Карніцкі: гісторыка-краязнаўчы і мастацтвазнаўчы нарыс* (The Artist Anton Karnicki: An Essay on Local History and Art Criticism), Мінск, 2009.

⁶ Г. Смоляр, *Менскае гета. Барацьба савецкіх габраяў-партызанаў супраць нацыстаў*, Мінск, 2002, pp. 82-83; original title: H. Smolar, *The Minsk Ghetto. Soviet-Jewish Partisans Against the Nazis*. New York, 1989.

It was forbidden to mention Janka Kaškiel's name in the Belarusian SSR, because he was a Nazi collaborator, and after the war he became a victim of Stalin's regime. Such people and their artistic heritage were destined to sink into oblivion.

With the end of the Second World War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, only the art historian Volha Cieraščatava in 1978 gave short information about four books illustrated by Kaškiel in 1927 and 1928.⁷

Surprisingly, even emigré artists who worked with Kaškiel for two years in the same editorial office did not leave a single line about him in their memoirs. One reason was that Kaškiel stayed in the USSR, and his emigré colleagues were afraid of harming him. But this did not apply after 1991, when many former *Belaruskaya hazeta* (Belarusian Newspaper) employees were still alive and wrote memoirs and gave interviews. Only Uladzimier Siadura (Hlybinny) mentioned Kaškiel's name twice in articles describing Belarusian artistic life during the 1920s.⁸ Between 1942 and 1944, Siadura was employed both by the magazine *Novy šliach* (The New Way), based in Riga, and by *Belaruskaya hazeta*.⁹ He must have met Kaškiel in person in the editorial office.

But the wall of silence was not completely unbroken during the 1990s. This is especially strange if we take into account that the names of many employees are widely known. Different publications inform us about the editors-in-chief Anton Adamovič, Uladzislaŭ Kazloŭski and Mikola Škialionak, the publicists Uladzimier Siadura, Natallia Arsienieva, Mikola Hańko and others, and even some translators (Volha Zubko and Nina Hliebka), but not the artists.

⁷ В. Церашчатава, *Беларуская кніжная графіка. 1917–1941* (Belarusian Book Design. 1917–1941), Мінск, 1978, p. 90.

⁸ Ул. Сядура, Вытокі беларускага мастацтва (The Origins of Belarusian Art), *Запісы Беларускага Інстытуту Навукі і Мастацтва* (New York), 1954, no. 1 (5), p. 38; Ул. Глыбінны, *Доля беларускае культуры пад Саветамі* (The Fate of Belarusian Culture under Soviet Rule), Мюнхен (Munich), 1958, p. 35, reprinted in: *Спадчына* (Heritage), 1999, no. 4, p. 7.

⁹ С. Жумарь, *Оккупационная периодическая печать на территории Беларуси в годы Великой Отечественной войны* (The Occupation Periodicals of Belarusian Territory during the Second World War), Минск, 1996, pp. 37–39.

In the middle of the 1990s, Ludmila Nalivajka reproduced several cartoon portraits by Kaškiel (dated 1928) in the newspaper *Holas Radzimy* (Homeland's Voice).¹⁰

Finally, Jaŭhien Cichanovič recalled Kaškiel once when speaking about artists who were persecuted in the 1930s (more details will be given further).

Janka Kaškiel (Янка Кашкель) was born in 1902, most likely in Minsk. He graduated from Minsk First Higher Primary School. Later, probably from 1918 to 1920, he studied at Minsk Polytechnic School, from 1920 to 1922 at the Polytechnic Institute in Minsk, and from 1922 to 1925 at Minsk Agricultural Institute.¹¹ Finally, in 1925, he entered Belarusian State University, where he studied until 1928, but he never completed his education there.

Kaškiel acquired a basic knowledge of technical drawing at the Polytechnic School and the Polytechnic Institute. In the 1920s he also studied at a complementary art school (called an 'art studio' at the time).¹²

No later than 1926, Kaškiel started to work for the State Publishing House of the Belarusian SSR.¹³ He illustrated books commissioned by this institution at least until 1928.

A total of 46 cartoons, jokes and drawings by Kaškiel were published in the newspaper *Žviazda* (The Star) in 1928. This is the best-known point in his artistic career. Kaškiel's works from that period are occasionally reproduced nowadays, sometimes without even mentioning his name.

But in 1928, Kaškiel had to leave the university to do his military service.¹⁴

¹⁰ Л. Налівайка, Сяброўскія шаржы Янкі Кашкеля (Friendly Cartoons by Janka Kaškiel), *Голас Радзімы* (Homeland's Voice), 2 March 1995; 23 March 1995; 30 March 1995; 27 April 1995; 18 May 1995.

¹¹ Асабістая справа студэнта БПІ І. М. Кашкеля (The Personal File of Belarusian Polytechnic Institute Student J. Kaškiel), 1918–1925, Нацыянальны архіў Рэспублікі Беларусь (НАРБ, the National Archive of the Republic of Belarus), ф. 210, в. 1, спр. 232.

¹² Картка служачага рэдакцыі «Беларускай газеты» Янкі Кашкеля (Janka Kaškiel's employee card), 3 February 1943, НАРБ, ф. 556, в. 1, спр. 2, а. 19.

¹³ Даведка аб заробку т. Кашкеля з 1 кастрычніка па 26 лістапада (Earnings Record of Comrade Kaškiel), 26 November 1926, НАРБ, ф. 205, в. 3, с. 3648, а. 13.

¹⁴ Пастанова Праўлення БДУ аб выключэнні І. М. Кашкеля з ліку студэнтаў (Resolution of

He came out of the army in 1930. It is not clear what exactly Kaškiel's occupation was during the 1930s. Most likely, he continued to work for *Žviazda*.

It is known that Kaškiel had faced Stalinist persecution even before the Second World War. The NKVD persecuted him for making an ideologically 'wrong' collage for the front page of the 1 May 1939 issue of *Zviazda*.¹⁵ It is not clear (because of the lack of documentation) how severe the punishment was.

Jaŭhien Cichanovič recalled in 2000: 'The graphic artist Kaškiel worked for the State Publishing House of the Belarusian SSR. His father owned a big shop during the New Economic Policy. This was the sole reason for the artist's arrest and exile ...'¹⁶

The documents of the Minsk Publishing House are kept in the National Archive of Belarus. Before the 1990s, they were inaccessible to 'ordinary' researchers. Just after the Second World War, it was used by the state security services to persecute real or alleged traitors.

Lists of employees, fees and salaries have been preserved from almost all the time *Belaruskaya hazeta* and *Holas wioski* (The Voice of the Village) were published. Thanks to these, we are able to trace members of the editorial staff and almost all authors who worked on a fee basis.

The newspaper for peasants *Holas wioski* was published in Minsk from October 1941. *Belaruskaya hazeta* was renamed from *Mienskaja hazeta* (Minsk Newspaper) in February 1942. *Belaruskaya hazeta* and *Holas wioski* in fact had some editorial staff in common. After several re-organisations, both newspapers became part of the Minsk Press Publishing House (created in March 1942). The publishing house came directly

the Board of the State University of Belarus about the Expulsion of the Student J. Kaškiel from the University), 28 June 1928, НАРБ, ф. 205, в. 3, с. 3648, а. 106.

¹⁵ Докладная записка Л. Цанавы секретарю ЦК КП(б)Б П. Пономаренко об итогах проведения первомайских празднеств по Белорусской ССР (Memorandum from L. Tsanova to the Secretary of the Communist [Bolshevik] Party of Belarus Pantaleimon Ponomarenko on the Outcome of the May Day Celebrations in the Republic of Belarus), 8 May 1939, НАРБ, ф. 4П, в. 21, с. 1678, а. 156-157.

¹⁶ С. Дубавец, *Вострая Брама. Выбраныя перадачы Радыё Свабода (1997–2004)* (The Gate of Dawn. Selected Transmissions of Radio Liberty), Praga (Prague) [S. I.], 2005, p. 480.

under the control of the General Commissariat of Belarus (Generalbezirk Weißruthenien).¹⁷ The publishing house ceased to exist in June 1944, at the very end of the Nazi occupation of Minsk.

In the first half of 1942, Uladzimir Lianovič (b. 1879) was the only artist employed full-time on *Belaruskaya hazeta*. Lianovič died on 18 June 1942,¹⁸ and Janka Kaškiel took his place.¹⁹

Of course *Belaruskaya hazeta* and *Holas wioski* were not politically neutral local newspapers, but mouthpieces for Nazi propaganda. Every issue included articles and visual material on political subjects. The Nazis' racial theory and anti-semitism were actively propagated. Strict censorship existed. It was forbidden to reprint without the censor's approval material even from newspapers published on the territory of the Third Reich. The newspapers published orders from the occupying civilian authorities, and official information about the administration. They glorified Hitler and other political and military leaders of the Third Reich.

Much of the publications was made up of articles about Belarusian personalities of the past and present, literature (poems, short stories and even novels), descriptions of Belarusian folk customs and material culture, and other local matters. There were also articles with a political content written by Belarusian nationalists. First of all, they were always strongly anti-Stalinist (anti-Bolshevik), and often had anti-Russian and anti-Polish connotations. Some Belarusian nationalists looked for links between Nazi and Belarusian nationalist ideology.

Most of the drawings in the newspapers (as well as the articles) were either anonymous or written under pseudonyms or cryptonyms. We know from archive sources that at least five artists submitted work to *Belaruskaya hazeta*. Moreover, the publishing house received cartoons from a number of sources, Welt Bild Dienst, the Ministry of Propaganda's picture distribution service, the Caricature Service of the Press Depart-

¹⁷ Жумарь, op. cit., pp. 24-28.

¹⁸ Супрацоўнік, Уладзімер Леановіч (Нэкралёр) (Uladzimir Lianovic. Obituary), *Беларуская газета* (Belarusian Newspaper), 24 June 1942.

¹⁹ Загад № 34 па рэдакцыі «Беларускай газеты» (Order no. 34 on the Editorial Office of the Belarusian Newspaper), 20 June 1942, НАРБ, ф. 556, в. 1, с. 2а, а. 156.

ment of Reichscommissariat Ostland, and the Propaganda Department of Minsk City Commissariat (which also had its picture service).²⁰

Thanks to archive documents, we are able in many cases to identify Kaškiel's drawings. There were no other artists employed full-time on *Belaruskaya hazeta* and *Holas wioski* from July 1942 until at least April 1944. Cartoons taken from German publications were usually signed, and this is also helpful in attribution.

The subjects of the drawings and cartoons corresponded with the general political line of the publishing house. We can find portraits of Nazi officials, including Hitler. Many of these portraits were photographs, others were taken 'as found' from German sources, but some were made by local artists (drawn from photographs). For example, Kaškiel drew portraits of the general commissar of Belarus Wilhelm Kube²¹ and the Reich minister for the Occupied Eastern Territories Alfred Rosenberg.²²

A lot of portraits of various Belarusian personalities appeared. Kaškiel made portraits of the poet Uladzimir Żyłka (1900–1933),²³ the Russian composer of Belarusian origin Mikhail Glinka (1804–1857),²⁴ the writer, historian and politician Vaclaŭ Lastoŭski (1883–1938)²⁵ and others, including one of the most prominent Nazi collaborators, the head of Belarusian People's Self-Help, Ivan Jermačenka (1894–1970).²⁶

The themes of most cartoons were political, as has already been mentioned. Many of them were taken from German sources, but others were produced in the Minsk editorial office. We can say for sure that Kaškiel created cartoons mocking the efforts of the Allies to land troops at Dieppe on 19 August 1942,²⁷ mocking Stalin,²⁸ and mocking Soviet Jews.²⁹ Liavon

²⁰ Жумарь, op. cit., p. 73.

²¹ *Беларуская газета*, 8 July 1942.

²² *Беларуская газета*, 12 January 1943; reprinted in *Голас вёскі* (The Voice of the Village), 14 January 1943.

²³ *Беларуская газета*, 1 August 1942.

²⁴ *Беларуская газета*, 20 February 1943.

²⁵ *Беларуская газета*, 20 October 1943; reprinted in *Голас вёскі*, 22 October 1943.

²⁶ *Беларуская газета*, 8 July 1942; reprinted in *Голас вёскі*, 9 July 1942.

²⁷ *Беларуская газета*, 30 August 1942.

²⁸ *Беларуская газета*, 4 February 1943.

²⁹ *Беларуская газета*, 14 July 1943.



1. Janka Kaškiel. *Dialectical Strategy* (caption: 'Loves – or not, will retreat – or will advance, will drive into a pocket – or put in a mess-tin'). 1943

Savionak (1897–1974), another employee of *Belaruskaya hazeta*, provided the theme for at least one of the cartoons drawn by Kaškiel (the anti-Stalinist drawing *Dialectical Strategy*) (Fig. 1). This can be concluded from inscriptions on a copy of *Belaruskaya hazeta* which is kept in the National Library of Belarus.³⁰

Special drawings were made to mark holidays. Some of these drawings by Kaškiel were apolitical, such as the picture *Happy New Year!* from December 1942,³¹ and the drawing to mark Easter of 1943.³²

The German occupying authorities allowed Belarusian citizens to celebrate 25 March (Belarusian Independence Day), so Kaškiel made the drawing *March 25* in the spring of 1943,³³ depicting a group of peasants under the Belarusian national flag.

The Nazis changed the celebration of 1 May from the former international workers' solidarity resistance day into a day of work and 'national' unity. For Belarusians, 1 May under the Nazis

looked almost the same as it did under Stalin. In 1938 and 1943, 1 May in Minsk was celebrated as 'a feast of work and spring', deprived of its sense, occurring alongside worsening living conditions and under a dictatorship. In 1943, Kaškiel prepared different drawings for *Belaruskaya hazeta* and for *Holas wioski*. A picture of a young worker with a pick in his hand was published in *Belaruskaya hazeta*³⁴ (Fig. 2), and a peasant with seed in a field appeared in the picture *I'm Sowing and I'll Reap the Crop* for

³⁰ *Беларуская газета*, 30 May 1943; the cartoon was also printed in *Голас вёскі*, 28 May 1943.

³¹ *Беларуская газета*, 31 December 1942.

³² *Беларуская газета*, 24 April 1943.

³³ *Беларуская газета*, 25 March 1943.

³⁴ *Беларуская газета*, 1 May 1943.



2. Janka Kaškiel. Untitled drawing for 1 May 1943

Holas wioski.³⁵ Both are dressed in ethnic shirts decorated in the Belarusian style. An article by Kube was published in both newspapers with the drawings. It was filled with Goebbels-style propaganda: ‘All traces of the exploitation of workers will fade away under German governance,’ ‘We do not know any capitalists in Adolf Hitler’s state.’³⁶

June 22 (the beginning of the German-Soviet war) was also celebrated. On 22 June 1943, the creation of the Belarusian Youth Union (BYU) was officially proclaimed in Minsk. This organisation came directly under the supervision of the General Commissariat. It was made up of young people between the ages of ten and 20.³⁷ Kaškiel made a picture of two youths, a boy and a girl, under the Belarusian national flag, with a symbol of the BYU on

it³⁸ (Fig. 3). The picture itself looks rather innocent, but it was placed next to speeches by Kube and Michaś Hańko, the chief of the BYU, full of anti-semitic escapades and praise of ‘Hitler the Liberator’.

Harvest festivities (*dažynki*) were celebrated officially in Belarus, as in other parts of Ostland. In 1942, Kaškiel drew two different pictures under the title *Everybody is Invited to Dažynki!*, one for *Belaruskaya hazeta*³⁹ and the other for *Holas wioski*.⁴⁰ The next year, one picture by

³⁵ *Голас вёскі*, 1 May 1943.

³⁶ В. Кубэ, Да дня першага траўня (On the Occasion of 1 May), *Беларуская газета*, 1 May 1943; reprinted in *Голас вёскі*, 1 May 1943.

³⁷ Ю. Туронак, *Людзі СБМ* (The People of UBY), Вільня, 2006.

³⁸ *Беларуская газета*, 22 June 1943; reprinted in *Голас вёскі*, 22 June 1943.

³⁹ *Беларуская газета*, 3 October 1942.

⁴⁰ *Голас вёскі*, 3 October 1942.



3. Janka Kaškiel. Untitled drawing for the Union of Belarusian Youth. 1943



4. Janka Kaškiel. *Everybody is Invited to Dažynki!* 1943

Kaškiel under the same title was published in both newspapers (Fig. 4).⁴¹ These were pictures of happy peasant women with armfuls of rye. The Third Reich needed the products of Belarusian agriculture, and this was underlined by the very fact of the existence of *Holas wioski*. Kube claimed in an article that the feast was ‘a challenge to world Jewry to a fight’ and ‘a declaration of the Belarusian peasant’s loyalty to the German armed forces.’⁴² *Dažynki* are a traditional folk rite which happened in every village in its own time after the harvesting ended. During the Nazi occupation, *dažynki* were centralised and widely celebrated, with the main events taking place in Minsk. Under Soviet rule, *dažynki* were celebrated

⁴¹ *Беларуская газета*, 2 October 1943; reprinted in *Голас вёскі*, 3 October 1943.

⁴² В. Кубэ, Сьвята Дажынкаў на Беларусі (The Dažynki Holiday in Belarus), *Беларуская газета*, 2 October 1943.

locally, without pomp. They were only recognised as a holiday of national importance in 1942 and 1943, and have been recognised as such in contemporary Belarus since 1996. Since that year, after a decree from Aleksandr Lukashenka, the president of Belarus, the ‘Republican Festival-Fair of Village Workers’ *Dažynki* has been held. Official propagandists of Lukashenka’s regime actively exploit the fact that the Belarusian white-and-red flag was used by collaborators between 1941 and 1944, in order to discredit the flag. Strange as it might seem, Lukashenka’s ideologists do not feel uncomfortable with the fact that *dažynki* were used by the occupying authorities for propaganda purposes as well.

On the occasion of the creation of the Belarusian Country Defence Forces, Kaškiel had to make the political drawing *Long live Belarus!*,⁴³ which was a picture of a local soldier-volunteer. As the situation on the Eastern and Western fronts became difficult for the Nazis, they proposed that the Belarusian authorities form national military units, which were expected first of all to fight local pro-Soviet partisans, and then to take part in military action against the Soviet army on the Eastern front.

Belarusian folk motifs, themes from Belarusian history and folklore, and Belarusian national symbols were widely used by the Nazis in *Belaruskaya hazeta* and *Holas wioski*, aiming to legitimise the new order. Sometimes the Nazi flag with the swastika and the Belarusian national flag were used together in one image, but quite often Belarusian motifs dominated visually in order to give a deceptive impression, as if Belarusian cultural life was blossoming under the Nazi occupation. The words of newspaper articles were closer to the reality: anti-semitism, the obligation to work hard, *ostarbeiters* sent to Germany, the SD and SS ‘keeping order’, and full subordination to the Reich.

Artists also had to make headings for regular sections and for serialised fiction. Most of those made by Kaškiel had no political connotations, like *Humour* (Fig. 5);⁴⁴ but some did, like the heading *Convincing Journey* for a series of articles by Uladzislaŭ Kazloŭski.⁴⁵

⁴³ *Беларуская газета*, 11 March 1944.

⁴⁴ Published for the first time in *Беларуская газета*, 23 May 1943.

⁴⁵ Published for the first time in *Беларуская газета*, 30 October 1943.



5. Janka Kaškiel. *Humour* (a section heading). 1943

A journey around Germany organised by the Ministry of Propaganda was described in the articles. The heading involved a picture of cars on a highway (*Autobahn*). The idea of ‘joining Europe and having access to all its goods created by progress’ was widely used in Nazi propaganda for the Belarusians. Kaškiel also drew the heading *From the Diary of the Belarusian SS* for the section about ‘brave SS soldiers fighting against Red bandits’.⁴⁶

Both *Belaruskaya hazeta* and *Holas wioski* published significant amounts of works of fiction, and many of these works were illustrated. Kaškiel illustrated a number of tales, poems and short stories for children, such as M. Daŭkša’s Tale about the Fly Burkucha and the Girl Murzucha,⁴⁷ and Natallia Arsiennieva’s tale The Better One Makes the Bed, the Better One Sleeps.⁴⁸ He also illustrated topical satires and short stories, like Ляв. Кам. (Liav. Kam.) the article At Full Length, about portraits of Stalin,⁴⁹ and Uladzimir Dudzicki’s short story Moments in Cypron Cyrubalka’s Life.⁵⁰

The series of illustrations for *From the Diary of I. Čužaninaŭ* by Liavon Savionak (Kryvičanin) is specially noteworthy. The Diary was

⁴⁶ Published for the first time in *Голас вёскі*, 23 September 1943.

⁴⁷ *Беларуская газета*, 9 October 1943.

⁴⁸ *Беларуская газета*, 28 March 1943.

⁴⁹ *Беларуская газета*, 13 December 1942.

⁵⁰ *Голас вёскі*, 26 August 1943.

published in *Belaruskaya hazeta* between March 1942 and June 1944. This satirical work of literature shows the life of ordinary city-dwellers during the war, as seen through the eyes of a russified semi-intellectual from Minsk. From the Diary of I. Čužaninaŭ is a striking testimony of everyday life in Minsk during the Nazi occupation. From the financial documents of the editorial office, we can conclude that between July 1942 and October 1943, Kaškiel made at least 20 illustrations for the Diary. Most likely, he made four more. The illustrations are lively, and are vivid images of the characters in the story (Figs. 6, 7).

From a comparison of archive documents and newspaper drawings, it becomes evident that Janka Kaškiel had at least one pseudonym, L. Jankoŭski. He used it in June, July and August 1942.

Photographic processing was probably also part of a newspaper artist's duties. We can conclude this from Kaškiel's application for 15 reichsmarks to buy materials for a photographic darkroom.⁵¹ Photographs appeared in *Belaruskaya hazeta* and *Holas wioski* from autumn 1942. Before that, drawings based on photographs were published in the newspapers, and Kaškiel drew some of them. *Holas wioski* required a certain number of technical drawings to illustrate articles about agriculture and house-keeping, so Kaškiel provided some of those, too.

What made the artist work in such a dangerous (from a political point of view) place? A newspaper cartoonist's position is not comparable with the positions of office cleaner, messenger or newspaper seller. A cartoonist is an ideological worker, obviously. By taking this position, the artist was evidently opposing the communist regime and the Soviet government. After the Nazi years, he had no way back.

We will not speculate here upon the ethical aspects of participation in the activities of the Nazi propaganda machine. Stalinist propaganda campaigns, followed by cruel repressions, formed a very special ethical attitude among citizens of the USSR. People were forced to choose between physical survival or personal non-participation in crimes. Quite

⁵¹ У бухгалтерью «Белар. газеты» (To the counting-house of *Беларуская газета*), not dated, НАРБ, ф. 556, в. 1, спр. 2а, а. 227.



6. Janka Kaškiel. *Observations of Razak's Operations Gave no Positive Result as yet* (illustration for *From the Diary of I. Čužaninaŭ* by Liavon Savionak). 1943



7. Janka Kaškiel. *Apanas Dziurka Bought a Hat* (an illustration for *From the Diary of I. Čužaninaŭ* by Liavon Savionak). 1943

often, they chose the first option, and actively condemned the ‘enemies of the People’ in public or in the press, wrote denunciations, and so on. And everyone, with no exception, had to lie in everyday life in order to survive: to lie about their political views, about their attitude towards the authorities, even about their close family and relatives. The ethical relativism established during the 1930s made it very easy for many Belarusians to adapt to the requirements of the Nazi propaganda machine.⁵² We have to take into account that the Nazi regime in the occu-

⁵² Compare with Valier Bulhakaŭ's thoughts on Anton Adamovič's ethical relativism: А. Адамовіч, *Да гісторыі беларускае літаратуры* (On the History of Belarusian Literature), Менск, 2005, pp. 10-13.

pied territories, particularly those inhabited by people of Slavic origin, was even crueller than the Soviet one, and many Belarusians were afraid of being killed, and therefore tried to avoid any confrontation with the occupiers, and obeyed all their orders. After years of being trained to praise Stalin in public (while hating him in one's mind), it was easy to praise Hitler, and for many people between 1941 and 1944 it seemed quite normal.

Not only had Janka Kaškiel been living in an atmosphere of constant fear during the 1930s, but he had also been persecuted before the war (as is mentioned above). Many members of the editorial staff of *Belaruskaya hazeta* were victims of the mass terror in Stalin's USSR: Anton Adamovič, Natallia Arsiennieva, Uladzimir Siadura, Jaŭchim Kipiel and others. Siadura was again arrested by the NKVD on 22 June 1941, but he was lucky to survive.⁵³ Thus the anti-bolshevism of *Belaruskaya hazeta* can be explained by the trauma of the personal experience of employees of the newspaper.⁵⁴

The material aspect of the issue was also important. A job on a newspaper gave a stable salary, a food card,⁵⁵ and a canteen pass.⁵⁶ In war time, when a huge part of the population of Minsk lived in poor conditions and was starving, the way of life of press publishing house employees was comparatively secure. And the job of a newspaper artist was what Kaškiel knew best.

An artist's fixed salary was 80 reichsmarks, or 800 USSR roubles. After taxes, there were 74.4 reichsmarks left. An additional fee was paid for illustrations. From month to month, this varied from 60 (June 1943) to 347 reichsmarks (October 1943), or even 412 reichsmarks (July 1942, including taxes).

Kaškiel had to look after not only himself but also his family. He had a wife (who was born in 1909) and a son (born in 1937 or 1938). Kaškiel's

⁵³ К. Старажойскі, *30 гадоў на службе роднай культуры* (Serving the Native Culture for Thirty Years), Дэтройт (Detroit), 1961.

⁵⁴ See: Я. Кіпель, *Эпізоды* (Episodes), Нью Ёрк (New York), 1998, p. 205.

⁵⁵ An den Herrn Stadtkommissar, 15 January 1943, НАРБ, ф. 556, в. 1, спр. 9, а. 161 ды інш.

⁵⁶ Гаспадарчаму аддзелу М.Г.К. (To the Economics Department of M.C.C.), undated, НАРБ, ф. 556, в. 1, спр. 2а, а. 128.

wife worked in a military canteen. The artist also supported his parents, who lived in the countryside about 30 kilometres from Minsk.⁵⁷

For many employees of the Minsk Publishing House, the motivation in working for these newspapers came from their nationalist views as well. They tried to put as much Belarusian national content into the newspapers as possible, trying to reduce the influence of German propaganda on their readers. After the Second World War, many of them claimed that they had no sympathy for the Nazis,⁵⁸ and this might be true, even if it is quite hard to prove these claims now.

The Minsk Publishing House was not isolated from either the genocide or the resistance movement. In 1941, Anton Adamovič, as head of the publishing department, had to check the 'racial purity' of employees' family members. He found out that A. Matusevič had a half-Jewish wife, but he also discovered that Matusevič at that time had already separated from his wife.⁵⁹ It is no surprise that Matusevič turned out to be a participant in the anti-fascist underground. Later in Minsk, he killed Fabijan Akinčyc, a well-known Belarusian Nazi collaborator.⁶⁰ The writer Ryhor Muraška, another employee of *Belaruskaya hazeta*, participated in the resistance movement. He put a bomb in the writing desk of Adamovič.⁶¹ When the bomb exploded it killed a policeman instead of Adamovič, and Adamovič was sent to Berlin. Arsiennieva admitted that some of the employees were so frightened after this incident that they almost stopped visiting the office.⁶² Several months later, Uladzislaŭ Kazloŭski, the editor-in-chief of *Belaruskaya hazeta*, was shot in the office. According to Arsiennieva, this almost put an end to editorial work in the office; writers worked mostly at home, and those who went to the office tried to find a

⁵⁷ Картка служачага..., НАРБ, ф. 556, в. 1, спр. 2, а. 19-194ДВ.

⁵⁸ For example: А. Адамовіч, *op. cit.*, pp. 16-17; У. Глыбінны, *Вялікія дарогі: Пра мінулае* (Great Ways: About the Past), 1997.

⁵⁹ Заступніку старшыні гораду (To the City's Vice-Mayor), September 1941, НАРБ, ф. 556, в. 1, спр. 2а, а. 254.

⁶⁰ Жумарь, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Н. Арсеньнева, Аўтабіяграфічны нарыс (Autobiographical Essay), *Беларуская эміграцыйная літаратура* (Belarusian Emigré Memoirs). Нью-Ёрк (New York), 1999, p. 248.

seat in the well-guarded building of the Commissariat.⁶³ The people were frightened, but some signs of sabotage could also be seen in their attitude to their work. Most of the staff were quite often late to arrive at the office, tried to get rid of duties, and worked slowly. This is noted both in memoirs⁶⁴ and in archive documents.⁶⁵

A number of employees were arrested in 1943 for participating in the underground resistance: the messenger L. Harbačou on 27 May,⁶⁶ and the assistant manager Siamion Jakaŭlieŭ, the driver Arkadz Savič, the car mechanic Barys Šymanski, and the messengers Hanna Koŭšyk and Anastasija Ivaš in September.⁶⁷ Nina Hliebka, who was employed by the newspapers on the editorial side, took in a Jewish girl who had escaped from the ghetto.⁶⁸

Janka Kaškiel worked for the Publishing House until the very end of the Nazi occupation. We can see this from the 'List of employees [...] to be sent to dig trenches'.⁶⁹ Kaškiel is the first on the list of 38 people. None of the editorial workers were on the list (later all editorial workers were evacuated). The list consists mainly of subscription department employees, street sellers and other technical employees.

After Soviet forces took Minsk, Kaškiel was arrested (this happened between July 1944 and November 1945). In the National Library of Belarus, the microfilm of *Holas wioski* (14 August 1942) is stored under the number Мфш1480. In this issue, a topical satire on Stalin and other senior USSR officials was published, illustrated with a cartoon. There are

⁶³ Н. Арсеньева, *op. cit.*, pp. 250-251.

⁶⁴ Н. Арсеньева, *op. cit.*, pp. 205-260.

⁶⁵ Загад па Прэсавым Выдавецтве Менск (Order on the Minsk Publishing House), 16 November 1942, НАРБ, ф. 556, в. 1, спр. 2а, а. 162-162адв.

⁶⁶ Загад № 46 па Прэсавым Выдавецтве Менску (Order No. 46 on the Minsk Publishing House), 4 June 1943, НАРБ, ф. 556, в. 1, спр. 2а, а. 168.

⁶⁷ Загад № 53 па Прэсаваму Выдавецтву Менску (Order No. 53 on the Minsk Publishing House, 20 September 1943, НАРБ, ф. 556, в. 1, спр. 2а, а. 173.

⁶⁸ Л. Юрэвіч, *Літаратурны рух на эміграцыі* (The Emigré Literary Movement), Мінск, 2002, p. 148.

⁶⁹ Сьпіс працаўнікоў, якія павінны зьявіцца 20 чэрвеня 1944 г. у 5 г. 30 м. раніцы на пляц Воі, для пасылкі на акопы (List of Employees who Have to Gather on 20 June 1944 at 5:30 a.m. on Freedom Square to be Sent to Dig Trenches), undated, НАРБ, ф. 556, в. 1, спр. 2а, а. 36.

inscriptions in Russian around the cartoon saying ‘Stalin’ and ‘Kalinin’, with arrows pointing to the characters, and the line ‘This drawing was made by me. 12.11.45. J. Kaškiel.’ Of course, it was written by Kaškiel while he was under interrogation in prison. Unfortunately, there is no record where the newspaper copy with the inscriptions is stored. It might be that it was used as evidence in the trial of Kaškiel, and it is still preserved in one of the old NKVD archives.

Kaškiel’s further fate is unknown. He was probably tried for ‘anti-Soviet propaganda and collaboration with the occupying Nazi regime’ and sent to prison. He must have ended his life somewhere in the gulag system in the late 1940s or the early 1950s.

The KGB archives in Belarus are still almost inaccessible to the wider public and researchers. Only KGB officers are able to use the material held in their institution. A small part of the material is available for limited public use. The KGB archives would probably shed a light on the fate of Kaškiel and give us more information about his life and work, but for that we have to wait. The National Art Museum of the Republic of Belarus made an official inquiry to the Belarusian KGB in March 2011 asking for information about Janka Kaškiel. There was no reply.

U l a d z i m i r V a l o d z i n

Janka Kaškielis: nusikaltimų bendrininkas ar dviejų diktatūrų auka? Stalininio ir nacių režimų karikatūristo likimas

Santrauka

Janka Kaškielis, gimęs 1902 m., buvo pusiau profesionalus dailininkas. XX a. trečiame dešimtmetyje jis dirbo laikraštyje *Žviazda* (Žvaigždė) ir Baltarusijos SSR valstybinėje leidykloje. Kaškielį išgarsino jo karikatūros ir draugiški šaržai, publikuoti 1928 metais. Tačiau po karo jo vardą uždrausta minėti, nes nacių okupacijos metais jis bendradarbiavo oficialiai baltarusių kalba spausdintuose laikraščiuose *Belaruskaya hazeta* (Baltarusių laikraštis) ir *Holas wioski* (Kaimo balsas) – kūrė jiems antibolševikines, antistalinines, antisemitines karikatūras, taip pat baltarusiško nacionalizmo įvaizdžius įkūnijančias iliustracijas.

Pasibaigus Antrajam pasauliniam karui, Kaškielis buvo suimtas. Tolesnis jo likimas nežinomas. Greičiausiai jis mirė kur nors Gulage – maždaug penkto ir šešto dešimtmečių sandūroje.

Kadangi neturime Kaškielio dienoraščių ar laiškų, galime tik spėlioti, kad jį pastūmėjo bendradarbiauti su nacių režimu. Žinoma, kad ekonominiai motyvai šiuo atveju visiškai suprantami: jam susirasti darbą, kad išgyventų ir išlaikytų šeimą karo apgriautame Minske. Taip pat negalima neatsižvelgti į tą aplinkybę, kad dar prieš karą jam teko patirti NKVD persekiojimus už tai, kad sukūrė ideologiškai „neteisingą“ koliažą laikraščio *Žviazda* 1939 m. gegužės 1-osios pirmame puslapyje. Kokios bausmės jis susilaukė, nežinome, tačiau į Gulagą tąsyk nepateko. Vis dėlto ši patirtis tikrai nepažadino simpatijos Stalino režimui.

Kaškielio darbus identifikuoti ne visada paprasta, nes jo karikatūros ir piešiniai dažniausiai nepasirašyti. Tačiau patikslinti autorystę leidžia Baltarusijos generalinės srities leidyklos finansiniai dokumentai.

Laikraščio *Belaruskaya hazeta* karikatūros beveik išimtinai politinės. Jos pasakoja apie tikras ir menamas Reicho armijos bei laivyno pergales Rytų ir Vakarų frontuose, tyčiojasi iš Stalino, rečiau – iš Roosvelto bei Churchillio. Nemažai karikatūrų buvo antisemitinio pobūdžio. Dalis šių piešinių buvo perspausdinama iš vokiškos spaudos, bet kai kuriuos sukūrė Kaškielis. *Belaruskaya hazeta* taip pat spausdino Kaškielio iliustracijas literatūros kūriniams, jo sukurtus žinomų Baltarusijos ir Vokietijos politikos arba kultūros veikėjų portretus.

Kaškielio vardas Baltarusijoje buvo legalizuotas tik XX a. pabaigoje. Pamažu jo darbai buvo sugrąžinti į Baltarusijos dailės istorijos diskursą. Tačiau dailininko biografija iki šiol nutylima, nes bendradarbiavimas su nacių režimu Baltarusijoje tebėra

draudžiama tema. Baltarusijos Respublikos nacionaliniame archyve saugomi okupacijos laikotarpio dokumentai yra laisvai prieinami, tačiau dailės istorikai jais retai naudojasi.

Karo metų Kaškielio kūriniai įdomūs ne savo estetinė kokybe, nes meniniu požiūriu jie gana žemo lygio, bet tematika. Kaškielio sukurtų *Belaruskaya hazeta* karikatūrų bei iliustracijų turinys padeda charakterizuoti Baltarusijos generalinėje srityje vokiečių administracijos ir laikraštyje bendradarbiavusių Baltarusijos nacionalistų ideologinius siekius.