

**MY WORK FOR THE STALIN'S STATE AFTER LIBERATION**  
**How I Saved the *Saviour* of the Two Yanishke Children**  
(this manuscript is untitled)

**Written by Jórek Blocher**  
ca. 16 Jan 1992

Translated by Vital Zajka  
Annotated by Ruth C. Clarke  
May 2023

**(Page 1)**

This is the story related to Yanishke<sup>1</sup> *der Smolyarnik* (the tar worker) who had a *smolyarnie* (tar/turpentine works) in the Shaikuny forest that belonged to the *porets* (landlord) Svalgin.<sup>2</sup> When the Germans started to *genumen farflgn* (round-up) Jews, Yanishke took his wife and two children and his wife's sister, and he made a *baheltenish* (hiding place) in the forest which he knew so well. He has provided himself with foodstuffs. His friend, a Pole, was a gardener at the landlord's estate. The children [of Yanishke] used to come to the gardener, and he gave them food to bring to the forest for them and their parents. Once, when they have come for the food to the gardener, there was a *khveit* (round-up) by Latvians who collaborated with the Germans, and they found the Yanishke's *baheltenish* and they took Yanishke with his wife and her sister, and their fate was the same as that of the other Jews in Ponary.<sup>3</sup>

Yanishke's two children were in the time of the *oblave* (abduction, capture)<sup>4</sup> at the gardener's, having come for food. He did not allow them to go to the forest to their parents, as they were no more there. And he supported them till the end of the war, when their aunt came from Russia, and took them with her.

Now I want to describe what did I do for the gardener who saved the two Jewish children and whom I did not know personally, but I heard the story from my *reter* (rescuer) Dubrovsky,<sup>5</sup> who lived not far from

**(Page 2)**

the Shaikuny estate, and who told me about it when it all was going on.

Now I want to tell what did I do for the rescuer of the two Jewish children after the liberation. I worked for the Russians as a highway engineer and was involved in building bridges on the [segment of the] Polotsk highway<sup>6</sup> that went from Naroch<sup>7</sup> to Vilne. At that time, they were

---

<sup>1</sup> Yanishke is a surname, spelled Janicki with the *J* pronounced as a *Y*.

<sup>2</sup> The *porets* Svalgin was the father-in-law of Zygmunt Szendzielarz (*nom de guerre* – Lupaszko) of the Fifth Wilno Brigade of the Armia Krajowa (a/k/a, the *Brigade of Death*) based on the Shaikuny estate.

<sup>3</sup> In the fall of 1943 during a partisan raid in the area of Hadziluny (where Urke was hiding), three Jews (identified as the Yaniskis who had the *smolárnye* in Saikuny) were captured. They were brought to a nearby hamlet and imprisoned in a *bedl* surrounded by barbed wire. The man broke out but became entangled in the barbed wire. The Ukrainians and Germans caught and beat him so severely that they broke his hands and feet. Then the three Jews (one man and two women) were sent in a wagon to Vilne to be executed. The story of the captured Yanikis can be found in Urke's *togbukh*.

<sup>4</sup> From the Russian word *oblava* meaning the same as the Yiddish *khveit*, e.g, an abduction, capture, raid, round-up.

<sup>5</sup> Konstantyn Dąbrowski of Hadziluny.

<sup>6</sup> The Polotsk highway from Vilne to Polosk runs through Michálesnik. It is an ancient road that has, over the centuries, been traversed by numerous armies, including the Grande Armée of Napoleon in 1812. When the Grande Armée passed through Michálesnik, they badly damaged the palace of the Brzostowski family, *gospodars* of the

rebuilding the large bridge in Michaleshik over the Viliya, and also a small bridge [at Michaleshik] and a bridge in Vorniany. And I had 850 workers, and they were not allowed to be enlisted to the army. And I perhaps helped them to survive [the war].

The first thing I did I found out about where there still were Jews who were saved, from the *shtetlakh* Vorniany, Michaleshik, Svir, and I right away made them *farbronirt* (exempt) from being taken into the army, as they worked with me on the highway [a prioritized project].

The second thing I did was I exempted every *goy* who was helping Jews, so that he could not be taken to the army. My office in Svir used to be full of *goyim* who offered me money and other things if I exempt them. But I did not take anything from any *goy* for that. Each day the office was packed with *goyim* that wanted me to exempt them, while the Russians used to make round-ups and to send them away to the front, give them a gun to shoot Germans.

### (Page 3)

[And the Germans] used to sit in the bunkers with heavy machine guns and mowed them down.

*Di khapersh* (catchers/nappers) have seized the *goy* who saved the two children of Yanishke and sent him to the front near Bialystok. He was there for some time, and when there happened an occasion, he threw away his gun and run home, and then was hiding in the forests around the Shaikuny estate, where he lived. His wife heard that *kristn* (Christians) said that in Svir, in the *upravlenie shoseinykh dorog* (highway management office) there is a Jew who provides exemption for all *kristn* who helped Jews in the time of the *Holekasht*. She had convinced her husband that [it does not make sense] to live in a forest hut. *Go to Svir, to the Jew, and describe him about the two Yanishke's children that we were hiding. He will exempt you, and you will be a free man.* The *krist* had taken his wife's advice, and he came to me in Svir.

There were so many people in the office, and the *goy* stands up and asks me that I come with him outside to the porch, and that he says that no one should hear what he is going to tell me. I see that I cannot get rid of him, and I say *All right, come outside.* We went outside, and he tells me: *I hid two Jewish children, I am from Shaikuny estate, the gardener, and I ask you*

### (Page 4)

*to exempt me, as I have heard that you help those who have helped your brothers under the Germans.* [I said:] *I have heard a lot of goyish talk [trying to get exemption] and I don't know you, but I got to know about you when I was hiding at Dubrovsky's.*

[I said:] *Let us go right to voienkomat (voienny komissariat – military commissariat; draft board).* I have dismissed everyone [from the office] and I took that noble *krist* to the drafting board in order to register the exemption for him. When the *voienkom* (head of the *voienkomat*, the military commissar) asks his name, and he answers, he [the *voienkom*] jumps up from his chair and says to him: *You, sukin syn* (son of a bitch)! *I have sent you to the front, how did you come here?* He makes a call, and the NKVD (*Naródnyy komissariát vnútreñnikh del* - The Department of Inner Affairs or The People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs; secret police) runs in and gets the *goy*, and they take him to a jail cell and the *voienkom* says to me, that in the morning he will go to hand him to the military tribunal for desertion from the front. I've got

---

*miastecko* from 1622 through the Napoleonic Wars. The Russian Campaign was led by Napoleon who spent nineteen days in Vilne and dubbed it *Jerusalem of the North*.

<sup>7</sup> Naroch was earlier known as Kobylnik.

*giblibn giflet* (steamrolled). The *krist* did not tell me that he was already drafted and run away from the front.

Still, I decided that I must save that *krist* but how? After I locked my office, I went to a rich *krist*, who worked with me as a *block-sheird* [word is illegible, perhaps *marksheider* (land surveyor)], and I took from him some ham and two liters of *butleging bronfn* (bootleg liquor). I decided to go to the *krigs komisar* (war commissar) at his home and see how I can set free that Christian. When it became dark, I went with the ham and liquor to the *komisar*.

### (Page 5)

The *komisar* was not a good person, but his wife Fruza was a very good soul. I knocked on the door and Fruza opened, and I went with her to the kitchen and put the ham and the liquor on the table. And I tell to her: *I have a case to solve with your husband, and I want you to be the judge*. She went out and called *voienkom*, her husband. She set the table with the ham and liquor, and we had a couple of drinks. And then Fruza tells her husband: *Mikhail, Blakher says that he has a case with you, and he wants me to be the judge. I think that you have nothing against it, that I will judge between the two of you. So Blakher, tell what is it all about here?*

And I say: *Fruza, how many kristn were hiding Jews—to count on fingers in our raion, it will not be even ten. And your husband wants to hand a krist, who hid two Jewish children, and now their aunt has come and took them to her to the Soviet Union—your husband wants to give him to the military court for desertion from the front. [And she says:] Mikhail, now you tell me what is your case? And the voienkom tells Fruza: I need every month to fulfill a plan for so-and-so many soldiers to be sent to the army. The Poles do not want to go to the army, and we need to catch them and send to the front. I had that Pole*

### (Page 6)

*sent to the front around Bialystok, and he threw away his gun and run away. And now he came with Blakher so that I have to exempt him, while in fact he must be shot for desertion, so that others will not do that. If I do not fulfill the plan to present the norm on the number that I must—I will be in Siberia.*

When I heard that for him it is about fulfilling the plan to present a particular number of people, I say to him: *You know what? I will give you 10 men for that one. I will take them off from our registration. You need to send the plain clothed NKVD to Michaleshik, to the bridge, as they will make a miting (meeting)<sup>8</sup> there and take 10 young men for that one.* He liked my plan, and Fruza, his wife the judge, said she thinks all is settled. And he says that if so, he wants 25 for the one, but then we settled for twenty. We finished the liquor and we both became drunk.

Early in the morning I went right away for the deserter. The *krist* was already half-dead [from fear]. The *voienkom* says to him: *Thank this man here, you sukin syn, for your life.*

---

<sup>8</sup> It is unclear to whom the pronoun *they* refer - whether Urke meant that *they* (his workers) who would be assembling at the bridge before starting work, or whether *they* (the NKVD) were to *make a meeting* at the bridge which the workers would be required to attend before they started to work, but most likely the former. That is, Urke suggested that the NKVD come to the bridge at Micháleshik in the morning when the workers would *make a miting* [would assemble together, perhaps to get their work instructions/ assignments for the day] and from this assembly, conscript twenty men for army service. This in exchange for exempting the gardener who had saved the Yanishke children.

The NKVD did what I told them, and I was gone to [illegible because the corner was folded, perhaps Miadel?]. I knew that the parents of those who

**(Page 7)**

were taken would run to me in Svir, asking that I get them [the young men] out. When I returned to Svir, they were already sent to the front. And the rescuer of children, I have exempted him, and no one could touch him. The *kristn* in the nearby villages said *That's how the Jews are holding one for another. They should have shot him [the gardener] for desertion, but Blakher saved him, because he was hiding Yanishke's children.*

U. Blakher

**(Page 8)**

Dovid, I send you this. It came to my mind, the story that took place in 1945. I had such a *tsufal* (incident, occasion). A woman from Vorniany, Perl Groger,<sup>9</sup> brought to me a young *krist*, and said that this *krist* had saved her. Before getting him exempted I decided to research this case, and I found out that he is in the [anti-Soviet] guerilla<sup>10</sup> and his father gave to Groger a cow [to tell that he saved her] so that I will exempt him. And she lied to me that he had helped her a lot.

I did not exempt him.

U. Blakher.

[ **(Image 9)**—envelope, postmarked New Haven, CT 16 Jan 1992]

---

<sup>9</sup> Perl Groger was perhaps Pesia Groger b. 10 Mar 1890, seamstress, the wife of Morduch Groger, b. 10 Nov 1887, bookbinder, both born in Varnionys, listed on the Yorniany ghetto list dated 22 May 1942 [LVCA/R-743/2/5004, p. 504].

<sup>10</sup> Meaning Polish partisans, most likely the Armia Krajowa, possibly the NSZ (*Narodowe Sily Kbrojne* (National Armed Forces) a Polish right-wing underground military organization which fought against both Nazi Germany and the communist partisans). See <https://sztetl.org.pl/en/glossary/narodowe-sily-zbrojne-nsz>