

The 1963 Krasnodar Trial

Extraordinary Media Coverage for an Ordinary Soviet Trial of Second World War Perpetrators

Vanessa Voisin

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Le procès de Krasnodar de 1963 : une couverture médiatique extraordinaire pour un procès soviétique ordinaire de criminels de la Seconde Guerre mondiale

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VANESSA VOISIN

THE 1963 KRASNODAR TRIAL

Extraordinary media coverage for an ordinary Soviet trial of Second World War perpetrators

In the city of Krasnodar, capital of the Russian Kuban', a public trial took place from 10 to 24 October 1963. Its nine defendants embodied the darkest aspects of the Second World War in the USSR. Auxiliary members and officers of the Sonderkommando 10-a, they were accused of having taken part in the extreme violence committed by this sub-unit of the Einsatzgruppe D, responsible for the "cleansing" of southern Ukraine and Russia in the wake of the Wehrmacht. Until their arrest in 1962 or 1963, most of these nine men had managed to conceal their past collaboration. Only three of them had been arrested after the war, but for less serious forms of collaboration. New investigations by the KGB from the late 1950s finally led to their identification as murderers, "torturers" in Soviet terminology (*karateli*).¹

However, it is not the profile of the defendants that makes the Krasnodar trial singular in the history of the many trials of collaborators held after the partial amnesty of 1955.² The present article does not aim at delivering a general overview of Soviet trials of the so-called second wave, a daunting task that would require a separate analysis.³ Nor does it strive to assess the standards of justice followed in

1. The author thanks Nadège Ragaru and David Rich for their careful proofreading and precious advice, as well as to Valérie Pozner, Jasmin Söhner and Irina Tcherneva. The latter moreover generously introduced me to the Mosfilm files on the Ginzburg project. A special thanks to the peer-reviewers of this article, who offered truly constructive ideas and relevant references.

2. The existing literature on post-1955 trials greatly underestimates their total number, as has revealed the collective work of the WW2CRIMESONTRIAL1943-1991 team in 2017-2019 through systematic analyses of the funds of the Supreme Courts of two Soviet republics and the analysis of over 20 newspapers of regional and republican levels from 1958 to 1970.

3. In contrast with the now abundant literature on the Soviet trials of war criminals in the 1940s, the historiography of the later trials of collaborators is still in its infancy. A recent attempt of overview can be found in Alexander V. Prusin, "The 'Second Wave' of Soviet Justice. The 1960s

III. 1: Farthest German penetration in the North Caucasus⁴



this or other trials from the late-1950s, and their relationship to political goals of the central or republican authorities.⁵ Instead it examines one case of “publicization,” understood here as the ways of making it known among various kinds of audiences and of building historical narratives on its basis.⁶ Indeed, the echo that was given to it clearly distinguishes the 1963 Krasnodar trial from dozens of others in this period, and specifically from trials in the south of the RSFSR. Numerous articles in the local and central press, a radio broadcast, a documentary film (*Vo imia zhivyykh*, In the Name of the Living), a best-selling book (*Bez dna*, The Abyss), and an aborted fiction film project superimposed layers of stories, sounds and images around the story of the nine defendants, their victims and the investigators who brought them to justice. Meanwhile, those remained stories; the investigation file and minutes of the trial remain inaccessible to researchers.

War Crimes Trials,” in N.J.W. Goda, ed., *Rethinking Holocaust Justice: Essays Across Disciplines* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2018), 129-157 and Andrew Ezergailis, “Geopolitics, History, and the Holocaust. Shifting interpretations of the Holocaust in Eastern Europe,” <https://haolusa.org/index.php?en/main-010-shiftinginterpretations.ssi#RETFN14>, last updated August, 2019. David A. Rich, “Law and Accountability, Secrecy and Guilt: The Soviet Trawniki Defendants’ Trials, 1960-1970,” in Eric Le Bourhis, Irina Tcherneva, Vanessa Voisin, eds., *That Justice be Done: Society and Accountability for Nazi and War Crimes, 1940s–1980s* (forthcoming).

4. From: Alexander Dallin, *German Rule in Russia 1941-1946: A Study of Occupation Politics* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2nd ed., 1981), 245.

5. This task is the goal of a collective article by E. Le Bourhis, D. Rich and V. Voisin as one of the synthetical results of the above-mentioned collective project: “A receding flow of accountability: Post-Stalin *karateli* trials and the shaping of mature Soviet society, 1955-1987,” forthcoming.

6. On this concept, see the editors’ introduction in *That Justice be Done*.

Variations in the way the story was told in the various media forms is one of the common threads of the present text, which also looks at how these works helped to stretch the echo of the Krasnodar trial over time.⁷ This diffracted time of the trial—from September 1963 (first article on the subject) to 1968 (a reprint of *Bezdna*)—corresponds to distinct contexts, which explains the interest in the trial while reinforcing its significance. First, the trial was part of a movement that began in 1953 to de-Stalinize the repressive practices of the Soviet state. By the time the trial took place in October 1963 a new practice of public trials of perpetrators had emerged in the USSR. After the 1955 amnesty the limiting of war cleansing solely to murderous criminals was based on both international considerations and the desire to relieve the police, judiciary and prisons of a mass of cases of collaboration that had been hastily tried under Stalin or were now difficult to document.⁸ This reorientation also took place in a context of social tensions resulting from the tens of thousands of returnees from the Gulag, and in turn encouraging the expression of a thirst for revenge rekindled by these returns.⁹ I argue that the mediatization of the trials of “torturers” promoted the image of a state that responded to its citizens’ thirst for justice and of a political police force conducting long and difficult investigations against “real” criminals.¹⁰ At the international level the Krasnodar trial was part of the competition between Western capitalist and Soviet socialist models of society that characterized the Cold War. It is thus part of a vigorous anti-Western propaganda campaign launched in 1960 that denounced the West’s forgetfulness of Nazi crimes and the protection granted to notorious murderers (according to the USSR). This campaign was in part a response to accusations against the USSR regarding respect

7. *In the Name of the Living*, a 38-minute documentary film directed by Leon Mazrukho on a script by Lev Ginzburg, Rostov Studio, 1964, Gosfilmofond (Belye Stolby). Lev Ginzburg, *Bezdna: Povestvovanie, osnovannoe na dokumentakh* [The Abyss, a Story based on Documents] (M.: Sovetskii Pisatel’, 1966).

8. Marc Elie, “Rehabilitation in the Soviet Union, 1953-1964,” in K. McDermott, M. Stibbe, eds., *De-Stalinising Eastern Europe: The Rehabilitation of Stalin’s Victims After 1953* (London: Palgrave-McMillan, 2015), 25-45 (here: 26-27). Idem, “Les politiques à l’égard des libérés du Goulag : Amnistiés et réhabilités dans la région de Novosibirsk, 1953-1960,” *Cahiers du Monde russe*, 47, 1-2 (2006): 327-347. V. Voisin, “Déstaliniser l’épuration ? Enjeux et impact de l’amnistie soviétique de 1955,” in M. Bergère, M.-B. Vincent-Daviet, D. Rigoll, J. Campion et E. Droit, eds., *Pour une histoire connectée et transnationale des épurations en Europe après 1945* (Bruxelles: Peter Lang, 2019), 237-254.

9. Lithuania: Emilia Koustova, “Les héritages de la guerre dans la Lituanie soviétique des années 1950 : les épurations, la soviétisation et la transformation des pratiques répressives,” in Bergère, et al., eds., *Pour une histoire connectée*, 309-326 (here 323-324). Ukraine: Oleg Bazhan, “The Rehabilitation of Stalin’s Victims in Ukraine, 1953-1964: A Socio-Legal Perspective,” in McDermott, Stibbe, eds., *De-Stalinising Eastern Europe*, 170-185 (here 174) and Amir Weiner, “The Empires Pay a Visit: Gulag Returnees, East European Rebellions, and Soviet Frontier Politics,” *Journal of Modern History*, 78, 2 (2006): 333-376 (here 369-370 and 364 for an example in Belorussia, 365 in Estonia). Latvia: see I. Tcherneva, “Créer les ‘documents qui accusent’...” in this issue.

10. This assumption is based on Koustova, “Les héritages de la guerre,” Prusin “The ‘Second Wave,’” and V. Voisin, “‘Au nom des vivants,’ de Léon Mazrukho : une rencontre entre discours officiel et hommage personnel,” in V. Pozner, N. Laurent, eds., *Kinoiudaica: les représentations des Juifs dans le cinéma de Russie et d’Union Soviétique des années 1910 aux années 1980* (P. – Toulouse: Nouveau monde; Cinémathèque de Toulouse, 2012), 365-407.

for human rights, and more particularly to the denunciation of its discriminatory policy towards the country's Jews.¹¹ Between 1958 and 1965, this rhetoric attacked the FRG in particular, despite (or because of) the establishment of the Central Office in Ludwigsburg in late-1958 to investigate Nazi crimes and the holding of trials as early as the late 1950s.¹²

The author of the plot scenario for *In the Name of the Living* and the book *Bez dna*, Lev Ginzburg (1921-1980) was one of the sharpest Soviet writers on Adenauer's FRG, neo-Nazism, and what he called German revanchism. Beyond his biased and caricatured descriptions of the FRG and his well-established status in the literary nomenklatura, Ginzburg was also an author of the Thaw. His incisive style fully assumed the author's subjectivity while paying close attention to the reactions of his readers. His interest in the history and memory of the Second World War stemmed initially from his work on German literature, but became increasingly personal with time. The writer reflects a tendency noticeable in various artistic productions of these years to question the human experience of the war, to accept the complexity of situations and the choices made by individuals. Yet these artistic endeavors met opposition from the censorship authorities, and were by no means an official new line.¹³

This text explores the investment of two artists, the filmmaker Leon Mazrukho (1908-1979) of the studio in Rostov-on-the-Don and the translator-essayist Lev Ginzburg, in the elaboration of complex and polyphonic discourses on what they considered to be an act of justice but also of memory and of contemporary struggle against neo-Nazism (called "fascism" in their works). It looks at the forms of mediatization chosen by the artists, the literary registers from the press to the "story based on documents" and the processes used to visually and phonically render both war crimes and justice at work inside the House of Officers in Krasnodar.

The study is based on a range of published sources—press articles, books, and a film plot (*stsenarii*) about the trial—as well as central and local archives documenting

11. Gennadii Kostyrchenko, *Tainaia politika Khrushcheva. Vlast', intelligentsiia, evreiskii vopros* [Khrushchev's Secret Policy. Power, the intelligentsia, the Jewish question] (M.: Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia, 2012), 232-255. See also James Loeffler, *Rooted Cosmopolitans: Jews and Human Rights in the Twentieth Century*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018.

12. Annette Weinke, *Eine Gesellschaft ermittelt gegen sich selbst die Geschichte der Zentralen Stelle Ludwigsburg 1958-2008*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2008.

13. Irina Tcherneva, Juliette Denis, "Je me souviens de tout, Richards (Rolands Kalniņš, Studio de Riga, 1967): une manifestation précoce d'une mémoire concurrente de la Grande Guerre patriotique," *The Journal of Power Institutions in Post-Soviet Societies*, 12 (2011): <http://journals.openedition.org/pipss/3875>. Regarding the revision of war history, see Barbara Martin, "'Inakopomniashchie' shestidesiatniki. Poiavlenie al'ternativnoi pamiati o Velikoi Otechestvennoi Voine v period Ottepeli i Zastoia ['The Dissidents of memory' of the 1960s generation. The Appearance of an alternative memory of the Great Patriotic War during the Thaw and the Stagnation]", in *Velikaia Otechestvennaia Voina v prostranstve sotsial'noi pamiati. Materialy mezhdunarodnoi nauchnoi konferentsii, posviashchennoi 70-letiiu velikoi pobedy 21 aprilia 2015 g.* [The Great Patriotic War in Social Memory. Collected papers of the international conference in Moscow, April 21, 2015] (M.: Moskovskii universitet putei soobshcheniia, 2015), 70-81.

police and judicial practices in the field of mass crimes after 1955¹⁴ and documents providing information on the media coverage of the Krasnodar trial recounted by Mazrukho (Rostov archives) and Ginzburg (Moscow archives).¹⁵ Finally, documents from German archives will help to assess aspects of discreet judicial cooperation between the USSR and West Germany, beyond the Soviet propaganda discourse which remains remarkably stable in its denunciation of the forgetful West.¹⁶

The first part examines the unique configuration that, in 1963, led filmmakers, writers, and the KGB to cooperate in communicating about both the investigation and the trial. A second moment analyses the extraordinary media coverage of the trial during the judicial stage and for several years subsequently. Finally, the last part queries the limits, real or perceived, of artistic freedom when it came to dealing with such politically sensitive subjects as betrayal, Nazi ideology and the Holocaust in the USSR.

Krasnodar, 1963: Inter-professional and center-periphery cooperation

The resonance of the 1963 Krasnodar trial was above all due to three encounters: that of a Muscovite Germanophile author-translator with the KGB of Krasnodar region; that of the KGB with the Rostov film studio, in particular a talented documentary cameraman-director; and that of the two artists, Lev Ginzburg and Leon Mazrukho. Archival limits impeded my investigation on the origin of the documentary film project—a KGB commission, or an initiative of the studio?—or on the nature of the relationship between Ginzburg and the KGB in Krasnodar. I will therefore formulate hypotheses on the basis of the available documentation, before exploring the product of this cooperation that appeared even before the trial itself.

14. Periodical sources include the daily newspapers of the State and Party authorities of three areas in the southern RSFSR, *Sovetskaia Kuban'* (Krasnodar), *Molot* (Rostov), and *Stavropol'skaia Pravda* (Stavropol'), as well as *Izvestiia* (Soviet state official daily) and *Pravda* (the KPSS Central Committee daily). In addition, there is the monthly film review *Iskusstvo Kino* (organ of film professionals), the triweekly *Literaturnaia Gazeta* (organ of the USSR Writers' Union), and *Sovetskaia Kul'tura* (organ of the Ministry of Culture and Cultural Workers' Trade Union), a triweekly newspaper on current artistic events. The KGB archives remain inaccessible in the Russian Federation, so we were not able to consult the case file of the October 1963 trial.

15. GARO (State Archives of the Rostov province), f. R-4105 (Rostov Film Studio) and interviews with Mazrukho's close collaborators. RGALI (Russian State Archives of Literature and Art, Moscow), various fonds; and Mosfilm Archives, f. 2453 (Experimental Fiction Art Films Studio).

16. We found evidence of this cooperation from the State Security archives in Kiev: GDA SBU [Central State Security Archives], f. 7 (Sledstvennaia chast' MGB/Sledstvennyi otdel KGB), op. 1, d. 9, vol. 9 (1966-1969) and d. 11. On the beginnings of this cooperation, see Jasmin Söhner's dissertation: "Die Zentrale Stelle der Landesjustizverwaltungen und die NS- und Kriegsverbrechen in der Sowjetunion. Eine ambivalente Justizkooperation im Kalten Krieg, 1955-1973" (forthcoming), and eadem, "After Nuremberg: The Appearance of Soviet Victims of Nazi Atrocities as Witnesses in West German Postwar Trials, 1964-1969," *Jahrbücher Für Geschichte Osteuropas*, 68, 4 (2020).

A meeting of passionate individuals and converging interests

The inaccessibility of the investigative file of the case and the only partial conservation of the archival file for the film¹⁷ compel us to rely on the works themselves, the publications of their authors in the press, interviews conducted in Rostov in 2012, and finally the archives of Sovetskii pisatel' press and the journal *Znamia*. The arrival of filmmaker Leon Mazrukho on the project is not definitively dated. It is known that two other cameramen from the Rostov studio, Zaven Baslaiev and Andre Brul', filmed before October, for purposes unknown: to record the proceedings? Or to prepare a short newsreel?¹⁸ It is plausible that they were the authors of the KGB interrogation and crime scene revisitation sequences shown in the film, although in a later publication Ginzburg attributes the images of Skripkin at Zmievska Balka to the cameraman Boris Manevich, a member of the Mazrukho team¹⁹ [Ill. 2].

Ill. 2: Examination of execution sites in *In the Name of the Living* (1965)



a - b: defendant Skripkin at Zmievska balka (Rostov)

c: defendant Zhirukhin near Novorossiisk

Mazrukho was subsequently contacted, perhaps because he had become a well-known documentary filmmaker by 1963 and the studio (or the KGB) had decided to produce a short film about the trial.²⁰ In an interview with a correspondent of

17. GARO, f. R-4105, op. 1, d. 226: file contains only financial, administrative (contracts, distribution authorizations) and technical (acts of delivery of versions) data. It does not include materials suggesting KGB involvement beyond the assignment of a consultant who lived in Moscow, Grigorii A. Dubenko (l. 37-38).

18. Telephone interview conducted by Valérie Pozner with Roman Rozenblit, former assistant to Leon Mazrukho (on other films), on 30 June 2009. The information was confirmed to me by Petr Ukolov, Mazrukho's assistant for *In the Name of the Living*: interview, 20 August 2012 in Rostov-on-the-Don.

19. L. Ginzburg, "Poslednii schet. Literaturnyi kinostsenarii s nekotorymi kommentariiami [Final account. Literary film scenario with some commentary]," *Iskusstvo Kino*, n° 7, (July 1964): 160.

20. *Sovetskaia Kul'tura* devoted short articles to several films made by Mazrukho in 1959-1960: Rezhisser L. Mazrukho, "Rasskaz o rodnom gorode [A story about the hometown]," (20 Jan. 1959): 3 (on the film *Rostov i Rostovchane*); G. Tiaglenko, "Sniato v selakh [Filmed in the villages]," (22 Dec. 1959): 2 and T. Khlopiankina, "Spor... [Dispute...]," (29 Nov. 1960): 1 and 3. Khlopiankina described Mazrukho as "one of the most interesting directors in the Rostov studio." GARO, f. R-4105, op. 1, d. 226, l. 40-41: film budget, dated 7 Apr. 1964, with an initial project in just two parts (less than twenty min).

Novosti Press Agency²¹ on the occasion of the film's release in February 1965, Mazrukho said:

I was offered the opportunity to make a film based on the Krasnodar trial of a group of traitors and turncoats (...)

Before I made a decision, I've been acquainted with the criminal case. In Krasnodar, the investigator put ten volumes of documents on the table. It is not enough to say that I was shocked by the crimes of the Hitlerites and their helpers. Memories flooded back of the war years, when, as a frontline cameraman, I saw with my own eyes the monstrous atrocities of the fascist murderers.²²

Perhaps it was the filmmaker's war experience that led the studio to make this choice. Indeed, Mazrukho belonged to a film crew of the southern front, which became the North Caucasus front, before being transferred in 1944 to the First Belarusian Front. This journey gave him the sad privilege of filming the graves and exhumations at Barvenkovo (early 1942), then at Nalchik, Krasnodar, Taganrog, Rostov and Kharkov (early 1943), and finally the opening of the Maidanek camp in summer 1944.²³ Mazrukho's memoirs note that the work on *In the Name of the Living* made him relive these nightmare scenes.²⁴ In any case, Mazrukho was already assigned to the film when his team went to Krasnodar on 7 October 1963, to prepare the shooting of the trial.²⁵

The story of the involvement of the writer Ginzburg is more complex. Originally from a Jewish family from Liepāja, Latvia who had taken refuge in Moscow during the First World War, the young man had developed an early passion for literature, especially Germanic literature. Mobilized in 1941 just after joining the Institute of History, Philosophy and Literature in Moscow, he entered the Communist Party at the end of the war, then resumed his studies. In the early 1960s, Ginzburg "had emerged as a leading poetry translator from German." A close friend of Iurii Trifonov and Iosif Dik (whose sister he married), and "as chairman of the Translator's Section of the Moscow Branch of the Union of Soviet Writers (...)" Ginzburg was a member

21. A news agency created in 1961 for international coverage and more permeable to the infiltration by KGB agents than the major Soviet dailies: Dina Fainberg, "Notes From the Rotten West, Reports From the Backward East: Soviet and American Foreign Correspondents in the Cold War, 1945-1985," PhD Diss., State University of New Jersey, 2012, p. 63-64.

22. Petr Iashchenko, "'Vo imia zhivyykh.' Dokumental'nyi fil'm o zlodeianiiakh fashistskikh voennykh prestupnikov ['In the Name of the Living.' A documentary film about the atrocities of fascist war criminals]," *Sovetskaiia Belorussiia* (12 Feb. 1965): 4.

23. Ibidem. Research on the teams on the front in f. 2451 (Moscow Central Studio) at RGALI, and f. 10094 (Mark Troianovskii, team leader with Mazrukho) at GARF, confirms his presence on these shootings.

24. Leon Mazrukho, "Stranitsy vospominanii [Pages of a memoir]," in *Nad fil'mom rabotali. Rasskazy o donscom dokumental'nom kino* [They Worked on Film. Stories on the Don Documentary Cinema] (Rostov: Rostovskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1988), 26.

25. GARO, f. R-4105, op. 1, d. 226, l. 42-49: the film budget indicates the dates and locations of the missions. Mazrukho, his assistant Petr Ukolov, cameraman Boris Manevich and sound recorder B. Kurov stayed in Krasnodar until the 26th.

of the Soviet *nomenklatura*.”²⁶ This privileged position in the literary institutional milieu and his mastery of German enabled him to make numerous trips to the GDR from the 1950s onwards, as well as a few to the FRG. He returned from these travels with his luggage full of classical and contemporary literature to be translated, but his mind filled with a growing concern for the political and cultural development of West Germany.

His early works as a writer denounced the “revengeful” and militaristic atmosphere he perceived had developed in the FRG since the country had joined NATO and received the right to reconstitute an army, the Bundeswehr (1955). *Dudka krysolova. Zametki pisatelja, 1956-1959*,²⁷ published in 1960, required numerous author’s revisions (including to the title), as the evaluators, particularly from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, considered that, although the subject was important and little dealt with, “the book presents a tendency towards one-sidedness in the choice of facts (...) so that on reading the book one gets the wrong impression: that in West Germany a backlash of the fascist type already reigns unchallenged.” The same reviewer noted: “But we Soviet citizens are interested in meeting another part of the West German population, which has not yet freed itself from bourgeois views but is concerned about the dangerous political development of the country and adheres to our foreign policy.” Finally, he found the gloomy description of Cologne quite exaggerated:

Such hyperbolic comparisons do not correspond to reality and can only help the propagandists in Bonn who accuse us of tendentious statements and thereby reject other more important statements in the book (...) What is important to denounce today is the military-revanchist development that the FRG is currently following, and the danger of German militarism, which also explains the oppression of democratic forces in the FRG.²⁸

In all, five external reviews occurred between March 1959 and February 1960 and Ginzburg had to moderate his denunciation of the FRG by adding elements about the struggle of West German workers against the Adenauer government. He was also asked to curb his “infatuation with [uncritical] self-standing description of various trials, including criminal trials, in West Germany”.²⁹ These trials, if they were to be

26. Maxim D. Shrayer, “Lev Ginzburg, Soviet Translator: The story of a Jewish Germanophile who became a Soviet investigator of Nazi crimes,” *Tablet Magazine* (October 24, 2018): <https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/news/articles/lev-ginzburg-soviet-translator>

27. A translation in English would be *The Rat-catcher’s Pipe: Writer’s Sketches, 1956-1959*. Ginzburg’s referred to *Rattenfänger von Hameln* (also known as the *Pan Piper* or the *Rat-Catcher of Hamelin*).

28. RGALI, f. 1234, op. 18, d. 341, l. 1-5: review of L. Ginzburg’s “Vstrecha s krysolovom. Zametki pisatelja, 1956-1959” [Encounter with a Rat-catcher: Writer’s Sketches, 1956-1959] by V. Krashennikov (from Min. For. Affairs), 24 Aug. 1959.

29. RGALI, f. 1234, op. 18, d. 341, l. 12-13ob: review by Iu. Korol’kov, 5 May 1959.

mentioned, should be raised through the (critical) eyes of the author, and not only through re-transcription of West German articles.

Lev Ginzburg's interest in the revival of fascism in the FRG and in the trials of war criminals held there from 1958 was better received by the reviewers of his next manuscript, *Tsena pepla. Nemetskie zametki* [The Price of Ashes: German Sketches, 1962]. The rising tensions with the FRG may have encouraged a more vigorous discourse of denunciation, or perhaps the caution of Ginzburg, who had included positive chapters on the GDR and the West German labor movement in the collection, explained the decline in reviewers' criticism.³⁰ As we shall see later, his presentation of Nazi racist ideology gave rise to criticism, nevertheless Ginzburg was able to maintain his highly innovative chapter on the Eichmann trial with few concessions. Besides, most of the chapters in the collection had been previously published by newspapers or literary journals.³¹

The initial plan to write *Bezdna* was rooted in a letter to Ginzburg from a Mariupol' reader, received after the publication of "The Price of Ashes" in the *Literaturnaia Gazeta* issues of 6 and 8 September 1960. Thus Ginzburg's initial proposal to the publisher predates the Krasnodar trial and has little to do with it. The book, provisionally titled *Po sledam* [In the footsteps], would narrate the writer's investigation following his receipt of this missive. The letter told the story of the evacuation of the author's family from a town that Hitler's troops were approaching and how, "thanks to the responsiveness, kindness and beautiful feeling of friendship that binds people of the various nations that populate the Soviet Union, his six-year-old daughter was saved." Then it referred to the recent murder of the girl in a neighborhood affair that Ginzburg said was more complex than it seemed. In any case, this project involved Ginzburg coming into contact with the criminal police and the prosecutor's office of the Stalingrad region. A contract was signed in October 1962 for a book entitled *Pis'mo* [The Letter].³²

How this project turned into a book on the Krasnodar trial remains a mystery. The most plausible hypothesis is that the Stalingrad police and Prosecutor's Office, aware of Ginzburg's interests through his previous writings or through the writer's self-presentation, informed him of the investigation that was developing in Krasnodar in the winter of 1962-1963. As early as February 1963, Ginzburg had abandoned his initial plan and was present at the interrogations of Skripkin, Veikh, Es'kov and others in the KGB offices in Krasnodar, after reading the investigation file.³³

Thus, the regional KGB does not seem to have initiated the Mazrukho film or the Ginzburg book. The inclusion of *In the Name of the Living* in the Rostov studio's

30. RGALI, f. 1234, op. 19, d. 362, Feb. 1961-Feb. 1962.

31. The closest to our subject were: "Tsena pepla [The price of ashes]," *Literaturnaia Gazeta* (hereafter *LG*) (6 and 8 Sept. 1960): 4 and "Delo Eikhmana [The Eichmann case]," *LG* (18 and 20 Jul. 1961): 4.

32. RGALI, f. 1234, op. 20, d. 292, l. 9-11: Ginzburg's proposal to Sovetskii Pisatel' for the book project *In the footsteps* (17 Jul. 1962). And l. 12-12ob: contract, 18 Oct. 1962 (date of manuscript's presentation was set for mid-April 1963).

33. Ginzburg, *Bezdna*, 59-60, 67, 71, 75, 88.

production plan for 1964 in the category of “newsreel-documentary” films confirmed that it was not a film commissioned (*zakaznyi*) by the KGB.³⁴ Nevertheless, the Krasnodar KGB welcomed both the writer and the filmmakers with extraordinary openness: they were able to consult the KGB’s massive investigative file, film interrogations and peruse the crime scenes, and, for Ginzburg, to talk one-on-one with each of the accused, which although incredible did actually occur, as shown by the information he delivered in *Bezdna*. There is nothing to indicate that Ginzburg was an unofficial KGB source, although he enjoyed considerable freedom of movement beyond the Iron Curtain.³⁵ It was Mazrukho who was responsible for having the film validated by the central KGB in July 1964.³⁶

After the February-March visit to Krasnodar, the writer returned to Moscow, where he had various duties as head of the translation section of the USSR Writers’ Union: hosting delegations of German writers, literary congresses, etc. In spring 1963 he returned to West Germany for the first time in three years to meet progressive authors and to consolidate his contacts in the left-wing intelligentsia. His impressions of the trip were later published in four long articles in *Literaturnaia Gazeta*.³⁷ These gripping writings—the author felt overwhelmed by an atmosphere of revenge that dominated the country and the indolence of the progressive intelligentsia—also reveal that the ghosts of the wartime victims of Eisk, Rostov, and Novorossiisk had accompanied him on his journey:

Still, I was tired of the pain that was not easy to tear from my heart—two hundred and fourteen children who were destroyed in 1943 in Eisk. It so happened that shortly before my trip to Bonn, I began working on a documentary story about the Nazi occupation of southern Russia. I worked in the Rostov, Krasnodar, Stavropol’ archives and in Krasnodar I learned the terrible truth about the children of Eisk. (...) Twenty years have passed since then, a great distance. Was it worth rushing to West Germany to “translate poems” from the Eisk springboard? Is

34. GARO, f. R-4105, op. 1, d. 238, l. 1. Ministerial orders were either filed separately or, if few in number, specified on a case-by-case basis. See on these points Irina Tcherneva, « Le cinéma de non-fiction en URSS: création, production et diffusion (1948-1968), » PhD diss., EHESS, Paris, 2014.

35. Shroyer, “Lev Ginzburg, Soviet Translator” and idem, “Lev Ginzburg,” in M.D. Shroyer, ed., *Voices of Jewish-Russian Literature. An Anthology* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2018), 660673.

36. GARO, f. R-4105, op. 1, d. 226, l. 6: letter from L. Mazrukho to the central KGB asking for approval to release the film on the country’s screens, 16 July 1964. The letter informs us that a private screening had been organized the day before at the Writers’ House (probably thanks to Ginzburg), in the presence of KGB personnel.

37. L. Ginzburg, “Poezdka v Zapadnuiu Germaniiu : Segodniashnii den’, kotoryi stal vcherashnii [A trip to West Germany: the today which became yesterday],” *LG* (27 Jul. 1963): 4 ; “Poezdka v Zapadnuiu Germaniiu: Segodniashnii den’, kotoryi stal vcherashnii,” *LG* (1 Aug. 1963): 4 ; “Poezdka v Zapadnuiu Germaniiu: Poeziia i politika [Poetry and politics],” *LG* (15 Aug. 1963): 2-3 and “Poezdka v Zapadnuiu Germaniiu: Nepodaleku ot Dakhau [Not far from Dachau],” *LG* (27 Aug. 1963): 3-4. According to Ginzburg’s colleague, Vladimir Soloukhin, who travelled to the FRG in autumn 1963, Ginzburg’s four texts appeared in German in the East German newspaper *Sontag* under the title “I was looking for poetry”: V. Soloukhin, “Neskol’ko dnei v Zaul’gau i Miunkhene [A few days in Bad Saulgau and Munich],” *LG* (14 Dec. 1963): 4.

there any connection at all between the Eisk and other tragedies of the war years and West Germany of '63? It had to be sorted out. Any kind of partiality prevents us from grasping the truth, we cannot let our emotions run wild, and we cannot stop our memories from being whipped up. I knew it, but I could not help it: the children of Eisk accompanied me as a silent reminder.

This self-doubt did not leave him for a moment: not in Bonn, nor in Hamburg, nor in Düsseldorf—and no matter how progressive the writer friends he visited were. In fact, the only colleague for whom he felt empathy (and whom in his later letters he addressed on a familiar basis) was Siegfried Einstein, who embodied, in his eyes, the “distress of truth”:

To put it mildly, Einstein is in “constrained circumstances”: publishers terminate contracts with him, no “respectable” editor dares to print more than one line. What is it? Why is the writer, of whom Thomas Mann himself foretold literary fame, boycotted and poisoned? Einstein showed me polite “refusals”: the concept of your book on Eichmann does not correspond to the general idea of the Federal Republic of Germany, we understand your feelings, however... accept sincere assurances, etc.... In his book, Einstein dared not only to grieve, but also to fight, to accuse not one Eichmann, but “eichmanns.” That is why his telephone was cut off by fascist hooligans, and the bosses of the publishing houses are not returning his calls (...).³⁸

During his trip, Ginzburg could not help but feel the invisible presence of the Nazi criminals mentioned in the Krasnodar court file, none of whom had been brought to justice. In the last article about his journey, we find many sentences and two photographs which later became part of Mazrukho’s film (Ill. 3).

This final article was devoted to the oblivion of Nazi crimes in the FRG, embodied by Walter Kehrer, one of the officers of Sk-10a, now owner of a prosperous restaurant. In a word, Ginzburg had not stopped thinking about the approaching trial in Krasnodar during his trip. He concluded:

Why am I writing about all this? (...) Because I did not go to West Germany for Kehrer, but to meet my poet friends, to see with my own eyes the life of this complex, interesting and in many ways contradictory country. And yet I could not help writing this last essay without touching the “sensitive point.” So that my West German friends may understand me correctly: if murderers live among them, then among us, in each of us, those are the murdered who continue to live, and what my trip to Germany would be worth if I were only interested in poems, museums, monuments, forgetting from where, from which lands that great misery had once come to us.

38. Ginzburg, “Poezdka ... Nepodaleku ot Dakhau.”

III. 3: Photographs published in Ginzburg's summer travel articles and reused in *In the Name of the Living*



The caption read:

(a) Walter Kehrler, present and past. In the photograph on the left, Hitler's war criminal, the murderer of thousands of people, Walter Kehrler "close to nature"; today, as we see, he feels good in West Germany.³⁹

b) And here is one of Walter Kehrler's chiefs, the leader of SS Sonderkommando 10a Kurt Christmann, who ravaged the Soviet Union. He now lives in Hamburg (FRG) and works in a commercial establishment.

Thus, the film project by Mazrukho and that of a novella by Ginzburg predated the trial itself and the meeting of the two artists. The latter apparently occurred during the excursion to Novorossiisk, organized by the president of the court, in which both men participated.⁴⁰ From this meeting, the film project grew in size. Ginzburg and Mazrukho agreed that "we cannot limit the film to just one Krasnodar trial. It was decided to expand its scope, to show the animal essence of fascism. This required the study of many documentary films that are kept in state film archives and fonds."⁴¹ In January 1964, the two artists met in Moscow where, for two weeks, they went to the film archive to select images from 1939-1945; it was at this time that Ginzburg had the idea of publishing his annotated screenplay in *Iskusstvo Kino*.⁴²

Several hypotheses can be made as to the factors that led these artists to devote works to this particular trial of "torturers." First, the trial echoed, twenty years later, the very first trial of genocidal criminals organized by the USSR in Krasnodar in July 1943.⁴³ This memory was ambivalent. Observers at the time had noted the

39. A third photo, not reproduced here, represents "the corpses of children killed by the fascists of SS Sonderkommando 10a in the Soviet city of Eisk." (quote from the caption).

40. Ginzburg mentions it in his last article on the trial, while Petr Ukolov and the memoirs of Mazrukho situate the meeting with the writer in this city: Mazrukho, "Stranitsy vospominanii," 26, and Ukolov, interview 20 Aug. 2012 in Rostov.

41. Iashchenko, "'Vo imia zhivyykh'."

42. GARO, f. R-4105, op. 1, d. 226, l. 50 for film production schedule. Ginzburg, "Poslednii schet," 156.

43. Literature on the 1940s trials of war criminals in the USSR has grown over the last fifteen years. The most recent works: Aleksander Epifanov, *Organizatsionnye i pravovye osnovy nakazaniia*

trial's spectacle-like character and lack of respect for the basic legal principles of a trial.⁴⁴ Mazrukho's film did not show footage of the 1943 trial, which he had helped to shoot,⁴⁵ although he made an audiovisual reference to Nuremberg and Jerusalem. Nevertheless, the trial was proof of the early Soviet commitment to justice for Nazi crimes, and moreover it also involved Sk-10a auxiliaries. Ginzburg was sensitive to this precedent, and to the fact that Kurt Christmann, SK-10a's commander, had been identified as early as 1943. For him, Krasnodar 1963 "finished," twenty years later, a movement begun by Krasnodar 1943.⁴⁶ Second, unlike other types of "torturers," the members of SK-10a had mostly followed the German retreat across Europe, and the list of crime scenes in which they participated included the Kuban' as well as the Crimea, Belarus and Poland. They embodied the ubiquity of Nazi criminal violence. Finally, unlike the trials held in the zones re-annexed in 1944-1945 or even certain trials in southern Russia,⁴⁷ it was possible to dismiss the question of the specific collaboration of certain Soviet nationalities. For works that aspired to a pan-Soviet distribution, such a condition was indispensable. Moreover, Ginzburg seems to have sincerely credited the friendship of the Soviet peoples, if we are to believe his book proposal (quoted above) or his other public or private writings. In any case, the meeting of the three professional circles yielded unprecedented images and information on the KGB's investigative work after Stalin.

A window onto investigations of state criminals

The reorientation of the purges of collaborators towards perpetrators alone from 1955 onwards met several political objectives. One was to restore the image of the political police, which had been badly damaged following the revelations of Khrushchev's "Secret Speech" at the XX Party Congress (1956). Communicating to the public

gitlevovskikh voennykh prestupnikov i ikh posobnikov v SSSR, 1941-1956 [Organization and legal bases for punishment of Hitlerite war criminals and their accomplices in the USSR 1941-1956], M.: Juniti-Diana, 2017. Franziska Exeler, "Nazi Atrocities, International Criminal Law, and Soviet War Crimes Trials: The Soviet Union and the Global Moment of Post-Second World War Justice," in I. Tallgren et T. Skouteris, eds., *New Histories of International Criminal Law. Retrials* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 189219. M. Shrayner, "A Public Hanging and the Trial of a Holocaust Poem," *Tablet Magazine* (July 14, 2020): <https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/arts-letters/articles/krasnodar-holocaust-poem>. For my view on the trials of the 1940s, see, V. Voisin, *L'URSS contre ses traîtres: l'épuration soviétique (1941-1955)* (P.: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2015), 236-273 and 352-370.

44. George Ginsburgs, *Moscow's Road to Nuremberg: The Soviet Background to the Trial*, The Hague – Boston: M. Nijhoff, 1996. Arieh J. Kochavi, *Prelude to Nuremberg: Allied War Crimes Policy and the Question of Punishment* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

45. Ginzburg, "Poslednii schet," 158.

46. Ibidem: "In 1943 in Krasnodar, from which the Hitlerites had just been kicked out, a trial of war criminals from Sonderkommando 'SS 10-a' took place. It was essentially the first act of state retribution against Nazi executioners, the first confirmation that they would be held accountable under the law for their atrocities: in this sense, the Krasnodar trial was a distant forerunner of Nuremberg (...)."

47. See below for trials centered on *Volksdeutsche* or "Cossack punitive detachments."

how the post-Stalinist KGB was conducting difficult, long, complex investigations in order to bring to justice individuals despised by their former neighbors became one of the motifs of press coverage of trials of “torturers.” Ginzburg’s picturing of the chekists’ work reflects this preoccupation, and we must receive his assertions with utmost caution, or even skepticism. It’s much likely that here fiction embellished reality. Yet some new practices of investigations are corroborated by other archival sources.

A *Pravda* article on the 1963 Krasnodar trial explained: “the SS executioners scattered like rats through the dark. They hoped to muddy the water. It did not work out! Our glorious chekists exposed the executioners, smoked them out of their holes.”⁴⁸ The assistance provided by the population was sometimes highlighted, as in an article on the July 1962 trial of four perpetrators in Cherkessk (capital of the Autonomous Republic of Karachaevo-Cherkessia, in the north Caucasus):

When a snake’s nest is destroyed, its inhabitants crawl in different directions—exactly as the German-fascist lackeys of the Kurdzhinovo punitive detachment [in Karachaevo-Cherkessia] did after the defeat of Hitlerite Germany. In the hope of erasing the traces of their bloody crimes, they changed their surnames and given names, they carefully disguised themselves. It failed! The organs of state security, supported by the active help of the Soviet people—ardent patriots of their motherland—found and unmasked the Hitlerite henchmen.⁴⁹

However, it was rarer for the media to go into the details of police work. Ginzburg’s *Bezdna* is an exception in this respect, dense with information for readers. We know from the KGB archives (Lithuania, Ukraine) that before opening a judicial investigation, the investigators carried out an preliminary investigation of the suspect.⁵⁰ In the case of Krasnodar 1963, Ginzburg suggests the investigation started with the “chance discovery” of bones (a questionable assertion) during construction work, the age of which a forensic examination revealed. He repeatedly emphasizes the magnitude of the “work” “of a large group of people,” “of their difficult research and their efforts,”⁵¹ and the awareness of chekists of their duty to investigate such cases:

The dead now and then remind the living of themselves. In cities, the living laid water pipes, dug excavations for new houses, in villages they ploughed wastelands and found skulls, bones, skeletons. The land returned those who had been hidden

48. V. Iakhnevich, “Vozmezdie. V Krasnodare zakonchilsia sud nad esesovtsami-karateliami [Retribution. The trial of the SS-executioners has concluded in Krasnodar],” *Pravda* (25 Oct. 1963): 4.

49. P. Fedorovskii, “Iz zala suda. Rasplata [From the courtroom. The reckoning],” *Stavropol’skaia Pravda* (31 July 1962): 4. Prusin offers several other examples: “The ‘Second Wave’ . . .,” 142.

50. Koustova, “Les héritages de la guerre,” 316-317. For Ukraine: GDA SBU, f. 5 (sledstvennye dela nereabilitirovannykh), d. 67722 (1959), 67723 (1963-1964), 19033 (1965-1966), and OGA SBU Nikolaev, d. 13153 (1965), d. 13189 (1966-1967).

51. Ginzburg, *Bezdna*, 136-137. The following quotations are from these pages unless otherwise indicated.

in it twenty years ago⁵². And then there was a phone call to the KGB office, where on the desk, under the glass—a newspaper clipping with the words of Fuchik: “I ask those who will survive this time: do not forget. Forget neither good nor evil, patiently collect evidence of those who fell for themselves and for you.”

Mazrukho’s film does not detail the initial phases of the investigation, probably for lack of images and to avoid introducing scenes of reconstruction into the documentary. Ginzburg, for his part, allows himself to narrate these stages, even though it is far from likely that he was present in person.⁵³ The writer insists on the extent of the research carried out after the macabre discovery, initially in the archives. Such a phase is attested to in accessible investigative files. It was coupled with the questioning of witnesses, already solicited at the time or newly identified. Ginzburg claims that the Krasnodar investigators initially had only the first name of one killer: “Alois.”⁵⁴ Systematic work would have then been carried out on the entire known trajectory of Sonderkommando 10a, from Mariupol’ back to Poland via the cities of southern Russia, the Crimea, and Belarus. There, the investigation team would have organized meetings of inhabitants to solicit new testimonies, and especially the names of perpetrators. The full identity of “Alois” is claimed to have been discovered this way, in Poland.⁵⁵

Ginzburg asserts that the investigators then launched a search across the USSR, which probably led them to many individuals, including the first suspect, who had changed his first name and patronymic and lived in the Kemerovo region of southwest Siberia. No one suspected him: he was a worker who exceeded the standards and had even been elected to the local committee (presumably of the union). The investigator who went to the site recognized him from the physical descriptions of the witnesses as well as from an SS trophy document—an identification card with his photograph.⁵⁶ When confronted, according to Ginzburg, the defendant stopped denying his crimes, and “conscientiously and calmly assisted the investigation”—including participating in crime-scene surveys and, although it is not mentioned in the book, he provided the names of other perpetrators.⁵⁷

If following Ginzburg’s deliberately gripping narrative, it was Veikh who definitively unmasked the second suspect, Skripkin. The KGB had long identified the latter as a mere *politsai* and had him testify in several earlier trials, notably the one

52. Mazrukho’s film also offered a similar formulation at its beginning: “But the ground has an odd property: it brings back those who were buried in it in a cowardly manner...” (min. 6).

53. He himself dates his arrival in Krasnodar in February 1963, after the arrest of Veikh, Skripkin, and Zhirukhin. *Bezdna*, 58-59, “Poslednyi schet,” 160 and “Poezdka ...: Segodniashnii den’, kotoryi stal vcherashnii,” *LG* (27 July 1963): 4.

54. In his first article about the trial, he repeats that “Veikh was the first in all things: to be questioned...”

55. Ginzburg, *Bezdna*, 138. The following quotation comes from the same page.

56. *Ibid.*, 139.

57. *Ibid.*, 141.

held in Stavropol' against five Volksdeutsche (ethnic German) members of the same Sk-10a in July 1961.⁵⁸ According to *Bezdna*, when Veikh confronted him Skripkin acknowledged his murderous actions and in turn gave two further names of defendants we find in the dock in 1963: Es'kov and Zhirukhin.⁵⁹ The investigation called upon numerous witnesses: perpetrators already convicted for these acts, and therefore very frank in their statements (*sic* Ginzburg), survivors, relatives of victims, and others. In addition to the Veikh SS identity card, documents drawn up by the Soviet investigative commission (ChGK) following liberation were attached to the file. For some unknown reason, the film *In the Name of the Living* does not show the Veikh SS card, although it did show a photograph of Kurt Christmann during the war and a document from ChGK on the exhumation of the 214 bodies of Eisk orphanage children.

In all, according to Ginzburg, the investigation for the October 1963 trial lasted more than a year, and was based on the solicitation of a considerable number of new witnesses and on extensive archival research, probably including the archives of recent trials (July 1961). Mazrukho's film captures this investigative work through shots—typical of this type of film—of the many volumes of the investigative file and through much rarer scenes of the accused's acknowledgment of the crime scene. Images filmed during the investigation show Skripkin pointing to a ravine near Rostov, probably Zmievska Balka, the main execution site during the occupation; Zhirukhin did the same in Novorossiisk. (Ill. 2) It was not possible for us to identify through the archives the initial purpose of these images: for internal use, by virtue of a practice in full development,⁶⁰ or for purely informational uses (for a newsreel), or as a deliberate effort made from the start with a view to a more ambitious project? In any case, the writer's early involvement in judicial investigations and the filming of investigative scenes attests to a desire shared by the artists and the KGB to showcase the work produced for these types of investigations.

The cooperation initiated at the beginning of 1963 between a team of film professionals, the regional KGB and an essayist increasingly passionate about the question of Nazism and collaboration in genocide produced a moment of unique media coverage for a trial in the south of the RSFSR. This media coverage used

58. Part of Skripkin's testimony as a witness in the July 1961 Stavropol' trial against five other former members of SK-10a is quoted in P. Fedorovskii, "Iz zala suda. Upyri v mundirakh esesovtsev [From the Courtroom. Ghouls in the uniforms of the SS]," *Stavropol'skaia Pravda* (28 July 1961): 4.

59. Ginzburg, *Bezdna*, 58-59.

60. See Irina Tcherneva's text in this issue. Several case files kept by the SBU confirm the use, as early as 1959, of photographs of crime scene acknowledgment, such as in the case of the investigation for the Krasnoarmeisk trial held in March 1959: GDA SBU, f. 5, d. 67722, t. 5, l. 227-228 (photo spread to the protocol of reproduction of the situation and circumstances of the event); t. 7, l. 211-212; t. 8, l. 56-59, 69-70, 380. These *protokoly* are usually accompanied by diagrams of the sites: *ibid.*, t. 8, l. 66 and l. 71. In some cases, the file contains protocols of exhumation with photographs: *ibid.*, t. 7, l. 356-357 et t. 8, l. 75. We found the same type of documents in at least two other files from the 1960s (OGA SBU Vinnitsa, d. 28506, 1966 and OGA SBU Odessa, d. 028965, 1965-1966). In the 1970s and 1980s, there are cases of audio recordings of certain interrogations and filming of crime scene acknowledgments and exhumations (GDA SBU, f. 5, d. 68140, Mirgorod 1978-1979; OGA SBU Chernigov, d. 14037, 1987-1988).

various media: immediate broadcast within the city, numerous press articles, a documentary film, a plot scenario with commentary, and a book. This diversity contributed to a polyphony and a diffracted echo of the trial, with effects in time (on the 1965 trial in the same city) and space (on investigations in West Germany).

Multiple transmission registers and unexpected impact

The 1963 trial in Krasnodar belongs to the number of trials where the media coverage was heavily directed against the West.⁶¹ Yet the trial itself remains a trial of Soviet “torturers” typical of the trials in southern Russia, without the kind of blatant falsifications linked to this international agenda as those studied by Meelis Maripuu and Andrew Ezergailis in certain highly mediatized Estonian and Latvian trials.⁶² The trial of the Sk-10a nine attracted unprecedented attention from the press, artists, Soviet correspondents in the FRG, and from the USSR Prosecutor-General’s Office. Although some stages of this cooperation escape the historian due to inaccessible sources, it is still possible to explore the echo given to this trial, both in the immediacy of the legal action and in the extended duration of the author’s works devoted to it, and to investigate its origins and probable causes.

Trials in public: live justice

Like other trials of “torturers” held in public since 1957, the Krasnodar trial took place in a building with cultural purposes, and provided with a dignified setting with a stage (court rostrum), probably also chosen for its interior layout and capacity (Ill. 4). The local House of Culture or Palace of Culture, or more rarely cinemas, were preferred by the courts in small towns. Sometimes the chosen venue was attached to a professional group or company, which then provides one of the civil co-plaintiff [*lobshchestvennye obviniteli*] for the trial. Finally, in some cases, generally in larger towns, an Officers’ or Police Club was chosen; the trial of Krasnodar 1963 was held in the House of Officers (Ill. 5).

The splendid rooms chosen for these trials were not merely intended to underline the spectacular nature of these acts of justice, but rather their solemnity: the judges’ desks and chairs were imposing, arranged on a stage or platform, centrally at one end of the room. Sober curtains decorated the back of the “stage,” sometimes even the wall behind the bench of the accused, and were frequently decorated with the insignia of the USSR (the sickle and hammer).

61. Irina Tcherneva, Vanessa Voisin, “La Shoah dans les documentaires soviétiques des années 1960: une reconnaissance ambiguë,” in *Filmer la guerre: les Soviétiques face à la Shoah, 1941-1946* (P.: Mémorial de la Shoah, 2015) : 115-122.

62. Meelis Maripuu, “Cold war show trials in Estonia: Justice and propaganda in the balance,” in T. Tannberg, ed., *Behind the Iron Curtain: Soviet Estonia in the era of the Cold War* (Frankfurt-am-Main: Peter Lang, 2015): 139-196.

III. 4: Interior of the courtrooms



a - b: Krasnodar, October 1963
(screenshots)

c: Baranovichi (Brest oblast),
9-15 March 1962 (idem)⁶³

The aim was also to welcome the widest possible audience into a space where visibility and acoustics were optimal. Spectators had to be able to see clearly not only the members of the court but also the defendants, generally seated in a space surrounded by a wooden ramp, to the right or left of the rostrum. When they were giving evidence from their “bench,” the accused were visible to the spectators in profile or three-quarters perspective. Witnesses, whose stories had an obvious emotional impact, were seen only from behind by the audience, because their bar was facing the court. The filming of trials partially erased these constraints, and showed the witnesses from the front (from the court’s perspective).⁶⁴

III. 5: Exterior of the buildings in Baranovichi (1962) and Krasnodar (1963) (screenshots)



The scenography of these trials thus privileged the solemnity of justice rendered by the Soviet State and the co-plaintiffs, but also the conditions for hearing the words exchanged, and observing the facial expression of the speakers. We know from

63. Screenshots from *Vozmezdnie*, dir. S. Braude, 1962. BGAKFFD, Derzhinsk, n° 855.

64. Those remarks are inspired by and indebted to the pioneer works of Julia A. Cassidy: *The Enemy on Trial: Early Soviet Courts on Stage and Screen* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2000) and of Lindeperg-Wieworka on the filming of the Eichmann trial: Sylvie Lindeperg, Annette Wieworka, “Les deux scènes du procès Eichmann,” *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales*, 63, 6 (2008): 1249-1274.

certain very precise minutes of the trials, from press articles and from a few rare photographs and films, that the public, which concentrated intensely and remained solemn most of the time, at times expressed an irrepressible grief. The murmurs of indignation and even outbursts of spectators personally affected by the crimes of the accused are also attested to.⁶⁵

A radio broadcast channeled through loudspeakers in the city's main park was also organized for the Krasnodar trial of 1963. This secondary audience likewise benefitted from live broadcast of the hearings, even if deprived of the image and solemnity of the courtroom. Also at the local level, agitators organized meetings in workplaces, training centers, and institutions during the trials to discuss the unfolding proceedings.⁶⁶ Thus, even before the media intervened, the transmission of the trial on the spot involved a direct audience, a secondary audience outside the trial venue, and a more distant audience that reacted not to the words spoken at the trial, but to the harangues and summaries delivered by the local agitators.

During the trial: a polyphonic press

At first glance, the 1963 Krasnodar does not differ markedly from the trials previously held in southern Russia. The local press—organs of the Stavropol', Krasnodar and Rostov authorities—covered ten perpetrator trials between 1958 and October 1963. The profiles of the criminals were diverse: former members of the auxiliary police, of the GFP, and of national punitive detachments (Cossack, Georgian). One trial was devoted to other members of Sk-10a—the Stavropol' trial of July 1961—where 1963 defendant Skripkin and the survivor of the Eisk Dvornikov orphanage (also present at the 1963 trial) testified, among others. This trial generated the largest number of articles in the local press (seven), most of them written by P. Fedorovskii of *Stavropol'skaia Pravda*.⁶⁷ The October 1963 trial, by contrast, resulted in twelve local press articles, an article in *Pravda* (announcing the verdict), a story in *Pravda Ukrainy*, the organ of the State authorities and the Ukrainian Communist Party, and three articles by Lev Ginzburg in the triweekly *Literaturnaia Gazeta*, which was distributed throughout the country. There is also evidence that the Krasnodar trial was reported on radio stations far away from the city. Ginzburg refers in *Bezdna* to the letters received by the court from people who had listened to a radio report on

65. Weiner, "The Empires Pay a Visit," 369-370. Visual evidence: RGAKFD, n° 0-262008 (photograph, Krasnoarmeisk trial, 1959) and n° 21526 (*Novosti dnia* n° 8, 1966, trial in Mineral'nye Vody), BGAKFFD, n° 855 (film *Vozmezdnie*, 1962). For more details, see Le Bourhis, Rich, Voisin, "A Receding Flow of Accountability" (forthcoming).

66. Weiner, *ibid.* For Krasnodar, we have the trace of these meetings in Ginzburg, *Bezdna*, 132-133.

67. On local media coverage of the trials held in Krasnodar between 1959 and 1974, see Irina G. Tazhidinova, "Krasnodar Open Trials of the 1960s: Mediatization of the Topic of Punishment for War Crimes in the Context of the Foreign Policy of the USSR," *Propaganda in the World and Local Conflicts*, 4, 2 (2017): 110-116.

the trial and especially to the discovery of a contemporary witness who was similarly informed and invited to testify: Glev Vassiliev, the former supervisor of the defendant Zhirukhin.⁶⁸ Unfortunately, to our knowledge, most of the radio broadcasts of Soviet radio stations were not recorded.

What is most striking about this press coverage, compared to previous trials in the region, is the variety of authors, even within the same newspaper. *Molot*, Rostov's daily newspaper, published a text from Ginzburg almost a month before the trial. This text, enriched with a letter of reaction to the article, would become a chapter of *Bezdna*.⁶⁹ To cover the trial, *Molot* called on a certain Boris Cherkasov of Novosti Press Agency. It is highly likely that this journalist relayed information about the trial abroad.⁷⁰ Finally, Mikhail Andriasov (1914-1984) provided two articles for this newspaper, on 24 and 26 October 1963. Originally from the Rostov region where he returned in 1969, the journalist was also a writer known for his accounts of the war, in particular *Shest' dnei* [Six Days] (1947).⁷¹ Three quilts, known or unknown to *Molot*, therefore. The Krasnodar newspaper entrusted the coverage of the trial to two individuals who were less well known in the Soviet Union: a certain Ch. Shakhmaliev, perhaps the Ch.I. Shakhmaliev, co-author of several annual football almanacs released by the publishing house Sovetskaia Kuban' in the 1960s, and R. Zakiev, presumably R.M. Zakiev, deputy editor-in-chief.⁷² It is not impossible that Ch. Shakhmaliev actually signed articles written by Lev Ginzburg, so striking is the similarity to the themes developed and even the formulations found in *Bezdna* and Ginzburg's articles.

Pravda entrusted the article on the verdict to a journalist who was also asked to cover the sentence in the Mineral'nye Vody trial in February 1966, V. Iakhnevich.⁷³ The most original articles were finally delivered by Ginzburg in *Literaturnaia Gazeta*

68. Ginzburg, *Bezdna*, 133 and 156-157.

69. L. Ginzburg, "Chelovek iz-pod krovati [The man from under the bed]," *Molot* (13 Sept. 1963): 3. The article announced the publication of *Bezdna* in the literary magazine *Znamia* in 1964. According to *Bezdna*, the article was published in newspapers other than *Molot* (p. 113). The corresponding chapter of *Bezdna* is located on pages 108-114 of the edition consulted (1966).

70. Fainberg, "Notes From the Rotten West," 63-64. A "Background Brief of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (London) Soviet External Propaganda," December 1980 explained: "The Novosti Press Agency (APN), though ostensibly unofficial and represented as an information organ of Soviet public organizations, is controlled by the Soviet Communist Party. Through its representatives abroad, it has contacts with Press agencies, publishers, newspapers, periodicals and broadcasting stations in more than 100 countries. It publishes 50 journals and 10 newspapers abroad in 56 languages" (p. 12): OSA (Budapest) HU OSA 300-80-1, box 754, folder "Propagandistskie kampanii, 1961-1991." Boris Cherkasov, "Eto prostit' nel'zia [It must not be forgiven]," *Molot* (15 Oct. 1963): 4.

71. Information on Andriasov comes from the Rostov libraries website, accessed 13 July 2020: <http://www.donlib.ru/personalii/2010/4/1/andriasov-mixail-andreevich/>. His lengthy articles on the trial covered almost the entire back page of the newspaper: "Palachi derzhat otvet [The executioners answer]," *Molot* (24 Oct. 1963): 4 and "Vozmezdie," *Molot* (26 Oct. 1963): 4.

72. It is mentioned in a biography of journalist Dmitrii P. Popovich from *Sovetskaia Kuban'*, <https://poisk-ru.ru/s29790t13.html>, accessed 13 July 2020.

73. "Vozmezdie. V Krasnodare zakonchilsia sud" and "Vozmezdie," *Pravda* (1 Feb. 1966): 4.

on 12, 19 and 26 October 1963, two of them on page one, an exceptional position for judicial chronicles.⁷⁴ Their singularity lay in the level of reflection, almost philosophical, to which the author submitted his retransmission of the events and accounts of the trial. Using the “I” systematically, Ginzburg gave up narrating the trial, a task already assumed by the local press. Instead, he drew lines of force that would later be found in the film he made with Mazrukho, in *Bez dna*, and even in his discussions with a view to making another film with the Experimental Art Studio (ETK) in Moscow in 1964-1967.⁷⁵

The first idea was that now, twenty years after the events, thanks to the remarkable efforts of the KGB agents, “everything was revealed.” Relatives of the victims, who until then had only scattered information about the deaths, finally heard the whole story. Beyond the living, this trial held so long after the fact finally did justice for the victims, whose voices seemed to be heard:

Before dying, the doomed usually flung a final curse in the executioners’ faces, a last salute to their friends, to the Motherland. These cries did not affect the murderers... Twenty years later, in the hall of the Krasnodar House of Officers, voices of the victims came to life, people put an ear to the wall of time. And they found out...⁷⁶

Ginzburg’s second idea from this first article was to identify a criminal system in essence, involving individuals as insignificant as the nine accused, yet as guilty as their Nazi leaders. And this system was not dead... it was re-weaving its web in the contemporary world:

I look at the defendant’s bench, I listen to the list of crimes and I cannot escape the idea that both these people and their atrocities represent some part of a huge, sinister phenomenon called fascism. In this sense, the nine insignificant turncoats themselves, unaware of it, were part of a “process” (not a judicial one, but a social and psychological one) that combined Hitler’s yearning to seize and the “territorial claims” of the West German revanchists, into a “whole,” anti-communism in its former and present appearance and racial arrogance, insidiousness that lie at the heart of public policy, and the brutality that has been elevated to an ethical norm, the cult of “power” and cowardly betrayal, because behind all these phenomena ultimately stands one thing: blood.

74. “Ruka vozmezdiia [The hand of retribution],” *LG* (12 Oct. 1963): 4; “Deviat’ za bar’erom, ostal’nye – za rubezhom [Nine behind the bar, the rest–abroad],” *LG* (19 Oct. 1963): 1; “Prigovor [Verdict],” *LG* (26 Oct. 1963): 1.

75. On the mutations of journalistic style during the Thaw, see Thomas C. Wolfe, *Governing Soviet Journalism: The Press and the Socialist Person after Stalin* (Bloomington – Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2005). Simon Huxtable, “In Search of the Soviet Reader. The Kosygin reforms, sociology and changing concepts of Soviet society, 1964-1970,” *Cahiers du monde russe* 54, 3-4 (2013): 623-642. Mary C. French, “Reporting socialism: Soviet journalism and the Journalists’ Union, 1955-1966,” PhD dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 2014. S. Huxtable, “The Life and Death of Brezhnev’s Thaw. Changing Values in Soviet Journalism after Khrushchev, 1964-1968,” in D. Fainberg and A.M. Kalinovsky, eds., *Reconsidering Stagnation in the Brezhnev Era: Ideology and Exchange* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2016): 21-42.

76. Ginzburg, “Ruka vozmezdiia,” (12 Oct. 1963).

This blood is the responsibility of the nine traitors before the court, no matter how insignificant their role in the global tragedy and no matter how far mankind has gone from the ditch graves. On the contrary, this remoteness in time gives the Krasnodar process a special symbolic meaning: nothing has been forgotten and nothing has passed “without a trace.”

The author then expresses the hope that the Krasnodar trial “will be of interest to West German prosecutors.” The abundance of evidence should allow them to finally prosecute the Sk-10a leaders who were enjoying a peaceful existence in the FRG. For justice is, for such unspeakable crimes, a universal need:

The ‘hand of retribution’ is by no means an abstract concept, and we should think with gratitude of those whose hard work, courage, and vigilant memory have exposed and put on trial traitors to the Motherland, accomplices to the fascist murders (...) No, retribution is not mystical, it is a necessity; the lesson should be instructive. Forever and ever. For the many...

Ginzburg’s next article, on 19 October, briefly discusses a new phase of the trial since the 17th: the hearing of witnesses. But instead of summarizing or reproducing their words, he continues his general reflection: “That is why the Krasnodar trial is perceived not as a simple trial of nine war criminals, but as another trial of fascism, of war and aggression.” A fourth structuring idea then appears. While “fascism” may have exerted an immense influence on some individuals, others, to the contrary, chose resistance. The question of individual choice, which will haunt Ginzburg’s other works about this trial, is posed by the opposition between these nine “turncoats” and the millions of Soviet citizens who, at the same time, risked their lives to repel the enemy. Finally, the article dwells on popular reactions to the trial, known through local meetings or by the written press and radio: from all over the USSR letters poured in from outraged citizens, who demanded severe punishment.

The writer’s final article, published two days after the verdict, focused on reactions to the trial—the reactions of the public within the courtroom, but also of those who had come from elsewhere to attend or testify. The author had spoken with them, and then shared his impressions of their emotions and their expectations of the trial. Ginzburg was the only chronicler to also mention the defendants’ relatives, young Soviet citizens, perfectly integrated and admittedly tortured by shame for their relative. This pattern is absent from Mazrukho’s film, but will reappear in *Bezdna*: the writer attached a certain importance to it. Ginzburg also recounted an excursion to Novorossiisk on a day of recess from the hearings, in the company of the president of the court, Malykhin, who wanted to see with his own eyes the places evoked during the trial. The film *In the Name of the Living* devoted a sequence to Novorossiisk, the heroic battles of its defenders, commemorated by a wagon pierced with bullets and, in contrast, the address where the deserter Zhirukhin had been hiding. The article of 26 October concluded: “The inevitable finale is coming. I look again at the people sitting in the hall, and I know that they, these people, are not heinous, rather they

are in pain. No, it was not the feeling of blind revenge that brought them here to the courtroom, but the thirst for higher justice, the sacred sense of rejection of evil...”

The other articles on the trial more rarely used the “I” because they were less concerned with sharing a reflection than with presenting the facts: the crimes committed twenty years earlier and, in the present, the attitudes of the accused, the witnesses, and the reactions of the public.⁷⁷ The articles published every two days in *Sovetskaia Kuban´*, the Krasnodar newspaper, chronicled the trial, following the chronological course of the event. *Molot* adopted a different communication strategy. After the inaugural article by Boris Cherkasov on 15 October, the periodical remained silent until 24 October, when Mikhail Andriasov took up the pen for two long summaries.

The numerous newspapers covering the trial, the mode of chronicling, and the personal preferences of the authors resulted in a rich polyphony of impressions and reflections on the trial. The first striking element, when comparing local reports with the articles published in the central press, is the attention paid to the national factor, whether it be the victims or the murderers. Jewish victims were explicitly mentioned in a large number of articles, including one article in the central press (out of four).⁷⁸ Two occurrences stand out from the rest. In his article of 13 October 1963, Zakiev chose to transcribe a passage from Skripkin’s testimony in which the genocidal logic of the Nazis is not openly stated, but strongly suggested:

In Rostov, Krasnodar, and other cities, says the former executioner, mass arrests, searches, and extermination of citizens were carried out. Announcements were posted everywhere urging Jews to come to the collection points. Moreover, the German command publicly promised them to provide security. But it was a cunning ruse. Thousands of Jews with their families were taken out of the city and destroyed there. I personally shot them near Krasnodar.

The article of APN correspondent Cherkasov went even further, presenting from the beginning of the text the hunt specifically for Jews:

Located in Rostov, the accused Sukhov, Es´kov, Skripkin, and Psarev together with the SS men perpetrated mass violence against the civilian population, primarily of Jewish nationality. The executioners were sophisticated in the methods of torture of innocent citizens.

The point on which the central press was clearly reluctant to comment was the national origin of some of the accused. The latter was easily identifiable by Soviet

77. Four articles out of twelve use the “I”: the first and last articles by R. Zakiev for *Sovetskaia Kuban´*, the last article from Ch. Shakhmaliev for the same newspaper, and finally Andriasov’s first article for *Molot* (see fn. 71).

78. Several mentions in Zakiev, “Poshchady ne budet! [Show no mercy]”; mentioned among other categories of victims in Ginzburg, “Ruka vozmezdiia”; highlighted as a particular category of victims in R. Zakiev, “Izvery derzhat otvet! [Fanatics held to account].” *Sovetskaia Kuban´* (13 Oct. 1963): 4; Idem, in Cherkasov, “Eto prostit´ nel´zia”; mentioned in Ch. Shakhmaliev, “Svideteli kleimiat ubiitsy [Witnesses have branded the murderers],” *Sovetskaia Kuban´* (20 Oct. 1963): 4, and in Andriasov, “Vozmezdie.”

readers by the mere sound of the names of Alois Karlovich Veikh (Volksdeutsche), Valerian Davidovich Surguladze (Georgian), or Uruzбек Tatarkanovich Dzampaiev (Tatar, probably). But the central press did not dwell on these defendants, unlike the local newspapers, which covered three of the non-Russian defendants at length. Zakiev and Andriasov explicitly presented the German origin of Alois Veikh, who volunteered to join the SS, benefiting from the favorable Nazi policy towards the Volksdeutsche.⁷⁹ Both local authors pointed out Veikh's promotion to platoon or "Caucasian Company" commander⁸⁰ and his decoration with an iron cross, an important distinction in the German armed forces. Moreover, it was the journalist called Shakhmaliev (a name denoting a Turkish origin) who first ventured to insist on the special destiny of Surguladze. Not content with giving up the fight and surrendering to the enemy, the accused had allegedly agreed to attend a special school to become a German agent. In the end, he was not sent to spy in the Soviet rear, but was assigned to Sk-10a. There he had distinguished himself so well by his zeal that he received two medals from his chiefs and was promoted to platoon commander. The article notes that after his service in Sk-10a, Surguladze joined the "Cossack Company" (in fact, probably the "Caucasus Company"), and finally the "Georgian National Legion."⁸¹ The other text insisting on this specific career of Surguladze, who returned to hide in Georgia after the war, is that of Andriasov on 26 October. Finally, concerning Emelian Buglak, it was once again Shakhmaliev who revealed his origin and his childhood in the Cossack *stanitsa* of Pavlovskaiia, in the Kuban'.⁸²

It should be noted here that Ginzburg, being cautious in his articles about the trial, is more explicit in *Bez dna*, even if he does not achieve Shakhmaliev's clarity there. For example, without saying that Buglak was of Cossack origin, he nevertheless specifies that the accused was a famous prewar horseman, who often travelled to Moscow for parades and demonstrations of *dzhigitovka*, an equestrian sport associated with the Cossacks. He gives his readership one last clue, specifying that during the war Buglak wore the *kubanskaia papakha*, a sheep-skin hat common

79. Dallin, *German Rule in Russia*, 288-293.

80. The two articles contradict each other on this point: Zakiev, "Poshchady ne budet!" and Andriasov, "Vozmezdie."

81. Ch. Shakhmaliev, "Palachi izoblichaiut drug druga [The executioners incriminate each other]," *Sovetskaia Kuban'* (16 Oct. 1963): 4. The author is most certainly mistaken when he states that Sk-10a was transformed into a "Cossack company." Other sources refer instead to a "Caucasian company," which was founded in late 1942-early 1943 in Stavropol' under the command of Walter Kehler (Andrej Angrick, *Besatzungspolitik und Massenmord: Die Einsatzgruppe D in der Südlichen Sowjetunion 1941-1943* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2003), 605, and Kiril Feferman, *The Holocaust in the Crimea and the North Caucasus* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2016), 181). It is very likely that during the retreat of Einsatzgruppe D in Belarus and then in Poland, those of its auxiliaries who were "Caucasians" joined this company. But it is equally possible that Surguladze actually joined a Caucasian unit of the Wehrmacht, since it is known that it was installed in northern Italy (Dallin, *German Rule*, 655) and that Surguladze was indeed there at the end of the war.

82. Ch. Shakhmaliev, "Volchi v ovech'ei shkure [Wolves in sheepskins]," *Sovetskaia Kuban'* (18 Oct. 1963): 4.

to Turkic men, again a marker of identity of the Cossacks of the Kuban'.⁸³ As for Alois Veikh, we learn in *Bezdna* that he took Reich German citizenship during the conflict.⁸⁴ In contrast, the film *In the Name of the Living* slips without a word on the national origin of these three characters.

A second striking feature of the local press was the frequent use of quotes from the trial and descriptions of the reactions of the public. With regard to the defendants, the obvious purpose of the quotes was to reveal traits of character: cynicism, total lack of morals, cowardice (for those hiding behind the excuse of obeying orders). The journalist's voice was to set out the facts, while the quotes from the defendants were to inform the reader about their inner world. Zakiev's text of 13 October on the testimony of Veikh and Skripkin transcribes the former's words:

Many doomed people, he says, cried, asking for mercy for the children. But we did not pay attention. Beating the arrested, we cut them off from the group of prisoners, drove them to the pit, and immediately shot them along with the children. I remember someone's baby crawling among the corpses. I shot him. Listening to Veikh, you can feel your blood run cold. You shoot a man, the sadist continues, and you look: only wounded. We buried him alive, as we were saving the bullets. But the most effective were the gas vans [*dushegubki*]. These facilitated the work of the executioners and accelerated the killing of Soviet citizens. We used it a lot. There was a rumble of indignation in the courtroom.⁸⁵

The same article recounts the murder of more than 200 children from the Eisk orphanage using the same gas vans: "During his statement in court, the people expressed their indignation..." A few witnesses are cited in these articles, either to shock the reader with horrific descriptions in the words of the survivor, or to confront an accused who persisted in lying⁸⁶.

Finally, some articles insist on society's demand for retribution. Andriasov refers to a witness from Rostov. Residing in August 1942 near the Zmievska balka killing site, she had witnessed many executions with her own eyes. In addition, her husband had been arrested and died in the town's prison. The woman concluded her testimony by saying: "The citizens of Rostov who accompanied me to Krasnodar, our neighbors, all in one voice asked for one thing: tell the court 'death to the executioners [*palachi*], death to the murderers!'"⁸⁷ Ginzburg cites, and Zakiev quotes at length,

83. Ginzburg, *Bezdna*, 144-145. The Cossacks also benefited from a privileged treatment in the Wehrmacht, as they did in the SS: Angrick, *Besatzungspolitik*, 602; Dallin, *German Rule*, 292-302 and 596-602.

84. Ginzburg, *Bezdna*, 139-141.

85. Zakiev, "Izavery derzhat otvet!". On the use of gas vans, see Eugen Kogon, Hermann Langbein, Adalbert Rückerl, eds., *Nazi Mass Murder. A Documentary History of the Use of Poison Gas* (New Haven - L.: Yale University Press, 1993).

86. Shakhmaliev, "Narod ne prostit'!", 23 Oct.; Andriasov, "Palachi derzhat otvet," 24 Oct.

87. Andriasov, *ibidem*.

the indictment made by two civil co-plaintiffs: D. Golubenko, a shock worker at the electrical-measuring instruments factory and V. Klochko, dean of the Faculty of Economics at the Kuban' Agricultural Institute and former commander of a partisan detachment in the North Caucasus. Their voices mingle with those of the prosecutor, Prosecutor Afanas'ev, who provides the general significance of the trial:

(...) it is a new, another trial of fascism, over the ideology and practice of imperialism, which was embodied in Hitler's atrocities. The materials of this process should once again remind everyone, including many people in the West, what the beastly face of German imperialism means, a face that in full, though under a new mask, the Bonn Bundeswehr retains.⁸⁸

The press coverage of the 1963 Krasnodar trial distinguished it from the other trials in southern Russia by its diversity, its plurality of authors, and finally the polyphony of the courtroom debates that it sought to restore. Admittedly, readers knew much less about it than the spectators present in the room. However, they got a fairly accurate picture of the crimes attributed to the defendants, of the victims targeted by the occupier, of the attitude of the accused in the courtroom, and finally the indignation expressed by their compatriots who heard the entire proceedings. In addition, the echo of the trial would resound for several more years through the investment of a filmmaker and of the journalist and writer Lev Ginzburg.

A time-diffracted echo

In July 1964, following a regular practice in film circles, Ginzburg published his annotated literary screenplay in the professional journal *Iskusstvo Kino*.⁸⁹ By this time, however, the film was completed;⁹⁰ perhaps Ginzburg hoped that this publication would strengthen his chances with the ETK, to which he had just submitted a fiction proposal based on the *Bezdna* manuscript.⁹¹ In January 1965, *In the Name of the Living* was released onto Soviet screens.⁹² At the same time, in the November and December 1965 issues of the major literary magazine *Znamia*, the writer published "Abyss: A Narrative Based on Documents." The 222-page essay was then released as a book in 1966 with a print run of 30,000 copies. Its success in bookstores and critically was such that a reprint the following year delivered

88. Zakiev, "Imenem naroda," 26 Oct. 1963.

89. Ginzburg, "Poslednii schet," 156-168.

90. GARO, f. R-4105, op. 1, d. 226, l. 5: Studio certificate on completion of production of the film, 30 June 1964.

91. Mosfilm Archive, f. 2453, op. 1, d. 178, l. 1 (project sheet) and 4-6 (Ginzburg's proposal, July 1964).

92. It is mentioned in the "filmography" section of *Iskusstvo Kino*, n° 1 (January 1965): 132. See also the interview with Mazrukho: "'Vo imia zhivvykh'. Dokumental'nyi fil'm."

100,000 new copies,⁹³ while the work appeared in German in a Munich journal, and in book form in Czech and then Italian.⁹⁴

The investment of a veteran cameraman from the front and an authority on Germany such as Lev Ginzburg undoubtedly contributed to the authorities' confidence in the resonance that would be given to the trial. In fact, beyond the ideological denunciations of the time (insufficient denazification in the FRG, imperialism-Nazism filiation), the book and even more so the film remained close to the acts of which the Krasnodar nine were specifically accused. The figures given on the victims were not exaggerated; quite the contrary.⁹⁵ And if the works followed the prosecutor's point of view by claiming justice against the German commanders of the nine Soviet defendants, then they did not go as far as trying the entire Nazi hierarchy *in absentia* (as had happened in the 1943 trial). Two historical studies refer to *Bezdna* to document the Holocaust in southern Russia and the Krasnodar trial of 1963.⁹⁶

Parallel to the work of the two artists was thus an investigation of the German criminals mentioned in the judicial file, and still at large. In an anonymous article of 24 September 1963, the reader was invited to rethink Ginzburg's four *Literaturnaia Gazeta* essays on the FRG, and in particular the final one, which dwelt on the impunity of Nazi criminals in that country. The author testified to the large number of letters from readers prompted by the article, and described the steps taken by the editors directly with German judicial authorities. They had sent the Ginzburg article to the authorities in Stuttgart and Hamburg and to the editorial offices of several West German periodicals, requesting verification of information on Walter Kehrer, Kurt Christmann, Heinrich Görtz, and others. The editorial staff of *LG* then telephoned these authorities, only to receive a rather indifferent reception, but also an important piece of information: it was the public prosecutor's office in Munich which was in charge of the investigations into Einsatzgruppe D (of which Sk-10a was an element).⁹⁷

93. RGALI, f. 1234 (Publishing House Sovetskii Pisatel'), op. 20, d. 293, l. 1: letter from Ginzburg to the publisher requesting a new edition of the book, 28 Dec. 1966. It reported the exhaustion of stock within a few days, the very positive reviews in the *Pravda*, *Literaturnaia Gazeta*, *Komsomol'skaia Pravda*, *Literaturnaia Rossiia*, *Trud*, several regional newspapers, the magazines *Moskva*, *Oktiabr'*, *Don* and others, and the ongoing translation into several other languages. L. 2-2ob: reprint contract provided for a second print run of 100,000 copies, 29 May 1967.

94. Parts of *Bezdna* were published in the magazine *Kürbiskern. Literatur und Kritik*, no. 4 (1967): 153-170 (I thank Jasmin Söhner for this information). *Priepast*, tr. from Russian by M. Krno (Bratislava: Publ. House for Political Literature, 1968). *L'Abisso* (tr. by Erika Klein, Milano: Mursia, 1974).

95. For systematic comparison of the information provided by the film and the book see: I.A. Altman, ed., *Kholokost na territorii SSSR: entsiklopediia* (M.: ROSSPEN; Tsentr "Kholokost," 2011 (2nd ed.)), 297 (Eisk), 474 (Krasnodar), 661 (Novorossiisk), 866-870 (Rostov), 961-963 (Taganrog); Angrick, *Besatzungspolitik*; Feferman, *The Holocaust in the Crimea and the North Caucasus*; Yitzhak Arad, *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union* (Lincoln – Jerusalem: University of Nebraska Press; Yad Vashem, 2009).

96. Emanuel Brand, "Nazi Criminals on Trial in the Soviet Union, 1941-1945," *Yad Vashem Bulletin*, 19 (1966): 36-44; and Arad, *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union*, 288, 587.

97. "Chetyre razgovora so Shuttgartom i Gamburgom [Four conversations with Stuttgart and Hamburg]," *LG* (24 Sept. 1963): 4. We share J. Söhner's hypothesis: the author was most

On 8 October, barely two days before the opening of the Krasnodar trial, the USSR Prosecutor-General, Roman Rudenko, sent the Director of the Ludwigsburg Central Office, Erwin Schüle, a detailed note about several German Nazi criminals (or Volksdeutsche), former commanders of SK-10a, identified by Soviet investigations. Schüle was asked to assist the Soviets in identifying the place of residence of these individuals so that the Soviet Prosecutor's Office could send the evidence at its disposal to the responsible judicial authorities. The list included several of the names mentioned in *In the Name of the Living* and *Bezdna*.⁹⁸ A few months later, Ginzburg learned in an article by A. Grigoriants, *Trud's* correspondent in the FRG, that Christmann was living not in Hamburg but in Munich. He immediately wrote to his friend in Munich, Erich Kuby, asking him to help verify Grigoriants's information by visiting Christmann's office and, if possible, taking photographs (which are found in *In the Name of the Living*, III. 6).⁹⁹

Munich did indeed resume the investigation of several of the names sent by the Soviets, and the judgments against these men, which took place between 1972 and 1980, included Soviet testimonies.¹⁰⁰ In the meantime, the Soviets and several Eastern Bloc countries had launched successive campaigns to obtain the repeal of the statute of limitations in the FRG for murder with aggravating circumstances, and the preparation at the United Nations Commission on Human Rights of a convention on the imprescriptibility of war crimes and crimes against humanity.¹⁰¹ The release of *In the Name of the Living* was postponed to January 1965, whereas the film had been ready and approved by all the authorities (including the central KGB) since August 1964.¹⁰² It coincided with the most virulent period of the Soviet campaign against the statute of limitations in the FRG, and closely preceded promulgation of the decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet that made Nazi war crimes and crimes against humanity imprescriptible.¹⁰³ Similarly, the publication of *Bezdna* in

certainly Boris Krymov, editor of the foreign department at *LG* and, according to a former member of the journal, a KGB agent (email exchange with J. Söhner, 20 July 2020).

98. ZSt [Central Office], GA [Generalakten] 9-31/20, Bl. 60-63. Many thanks to J. Söhner for sharing this information.

99. RGALI, f. 631 (State Edition Khudozhestvennaia literatura), op. 26, d. 3226, l. 4-5: letter from Ginzburg to Kuby, 3 Feb. 1964 (typescript in German) and l. 6-8 (manuscript in Russian).

100. Prof. Mr. C.F. Rüter, Dr. D.W. de Mildt, eds., *Justiz und NS-Verbrechen: Sammlung Deutscher Strafurteile Wegen Nationalsozialistischer Tötungsverbrechen 1945-1999* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press/München: K.G. Saur Verlag, 2007), *Band XXXVII*, 393-441 (case 777), *Band XL* (case 816), *Band XLIV* (case 864).

101. Raluca Grosescu, "State Socialist Endeavours for the Non-Applicability of Statutory Limitations to International Crimes. Historical Roots and Current Implications," *Journal of the History of International Law*, 21, 2 (2019): 239-269. See also, on the Soviet propaganda campaign, Voisin, "'In the name of the living,'" 375-380.

102. GARO, f. R-4105, op. 1, d. 226, l. 11: distribution authorized throughout the RSFSR, 7 July 1964. L. 2: distribution authorized throughout the USSR, for all audiences until 1 July 1968, dated 11 Aug. 1964.

103. "On the punishment of those responsible for crimes against peace and humanity and war crimes, regardless of the time of the commission of crimes," *Vedomosti Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR*, n° 10 (1965): 186. Ratified into law on 2 October 1965: *idem*, n° 39 (1965): 902. Adopted

1966-1967 coincided to the Eastern Bloc's campaign for an international convention on this imprescriptibility. The Krasnodar trial thus remained fully topical, almost four years after it was held.

**III. 6: Photographs of the building housing Christmann's office,
used in *In the Name of the Living***



Finally, an indirect echo of the 1963 trial was the filming, two years later, of a major Trawniki trial held in Krasnodar in June 1965. This filming was the result of work undertaken at the ETK following a proposal from Ginzburg submitted in July 1964.¹⁰⁴ During a discussion of the script committee in April 1965, Ginzburg informed the filmmakers of the imminent announcement of another trial of “torturers” in the capital of Kuban’; clearly, the author had maintained contact with the regional KGB, which enabled him to learn of this information long before it was made public. As there was still a hesitation between fiction and documentary,¹⁰⁵ as Ginzburg was struggling to come up with a fictional plot scenario that was satisfactory to the filmmakers, it was decided to send a crew to film the June 1965 trial.¹⁰⁶ Immediately, the director of the studio, Vladimir Pozner contacted the USSR Film Committee, the KGB and the Central Studio of Documentary Films to obtain all necessary authorizations, the budget, and a team of cameramen.¹⁰⁷ As early as 22 April, a team was on-site to organize the filming at the KGB premises. The team installed

in a morning session, the decree appeared on the front page of the *Izvestiia* of the same day, was broadcast on Radio Moskva-1 at 12.58 p.m., and was reproduced the next day on the front page of some republican newspapers.

104. Mosfilm Archives, f. 2453, op. 1, d. 178, l. 4-6.

105. This hesitation ended up exasperating Ginzburg, who had to work on a fiction project between 1964 and 1967, then a documentary, then again a fiction project, because the Experimental Studio was unable to obtain permission to produce documentary films. This pitfall, and the weariness of three years of work in vain, sealed the abandonment of the project in July 1967: Mosfilm Archives, f. 2453, op. 1, d. 178, l. 89-90.

106. *Ibid.*, l. 13-19: meeting of the Scriptwriting Committee devoted to the first version of the script of *The Trial*, 12 Apr. 1965.

107. *Ibid.*, l. 21-28: correspondence sent between 16 and 21 April 1965.

a concealed interrogation room camera and organized fresh interrogations and confrontations of defendants in order to ask them questions prepared by Ginzburg. Four days of filming took place in April, and three more in early May. The team also made an initial examination of the room where the trial was to be held: the club of an electrical measuring instruments factory.¹⁰⁸ In mid-May, a group of decorators inspected the room again and decided what fittings and work (repairs, painting) were needed to film the trial by concealed camera. The scope of the modifications was significant, and the filmmakers were pleased with the assistance provided by the regional KGB, local workshops and factories, etc.¹⁰⁹ All the requests were granted, and the entire trial was filmed, according to the diary of shots taken from 1 to 8 June 1965.¹¹⁰ The fate of those many reels recording scenes of KGB investigations, scenes in Krasnodar during the trial, and the trial itself is unknown. The renunciation of the film project with Ginzburg probably condemned them to the archives (but which ones?) or to film stock recycling. In any case, this operation shows once again that some of the filming of the trials was not the result of requests from the KGB, but from the artists, and that the inter-professional cooperation in the field went smoothly, perhaps thanks to the links established by Ginzburg since 1963.

The media coverage of this trial is interesting in that, as part of local initiatives,¹¹¹ it reached a pan-Soviet and even international resonance, in particular through the particular involvement of a film-maker and a writer specializing in Germany. Echoes of the Krasnodar trial resounded through the East German press campaign against the statute of limitations in the FRG (1964-65). However, while the works of Mazrukho and Ginzburg were fully in line with Soviet international propaganda in those years, they also dealt with memory from below, here carried by the artists and, differently, in two artistic media.

Perceived and actual limits of artistic discourse on the war

The diverse echo given to the Krasnodar trial in Mazrukho-Ginzburg's documentary film, Ginzburg's publications and the aborted fiction project with ETK reveals ambiguity, hesitations, and fear of censorship in the authors' picturing of collaboration, Nazism and the Holocaust. This part explores the extent of the renewal of the discourse on war in these works, scrutinizing simultaneously several parameters likely to influence it. The artists' interviews, works (and their editing), and unpublished archival documents offer an insight into their personal views on these delicate topics.

108. Ibid., I. 32-35: report on "the work of the film group in Krasnodar" (undated).

109. Ibid., I.38-39: report on "the trip to Krasnodar" from 12 to 16 May. And I.54: a warm letter of thanks to the head of the Krasnodar KGB Directorate, General Naimushin, 17 June 1965.

110. Ibid., I. 43-47: diary of footage from the Krasnodar trial, by film director E. Khodzhikian.

111. This can be contrasted with productions on these themes undertaken in Moscow: the "updated" reprint of Roman Karmen's *Sud narodov* [The people's court] in 1962, the film-pamphlet attacking the Koblenz trial *Zhertvy obviniaut* [The victims accuse] in 1963, or Mikhail Romm's famous *Obyknoennyi fashizm* [Ordinary fascism] in 1965.

The artists' perception of what could—or could not—be written or shown also influenced their creative choices. Finally, much depended on the resources of the institutions producing their work and on the artists' position within their milieus.

Renewing an old theme: The Trial of Fascism

The idea that it was a question of putting fascism on trial in 1963 Krasnodar, or at least of denouncing its real essence, appeared in the final speech of the prosecutor, the articles about the trial, and in the works of Mazrukho and Ginzburg. It was not new: the high-profile Soviet trials of 1943, 1945-1946 and 1947 already affirmed that the heinous crimes of the accused were part of a global project, that of “fascist” imperialism. It also included the idea of the criminal responsibility of each and every one of the cogs of this system, from Hitler to the petty executioners on the spot.¹¹² In 1963, the stakes were different: the re-actualization of the crimes of the past served the purposes of a discourse on the present. Artists also seized upon this shift towards the concerns of the present to nuance the official discourse on Nazism. But Mazrukho's film was less explicit on this point than Ginzburg's texts, and it is worth asking what variations the audiovisual and the written word allowed.

The trial of German imperialism is one of the main patterns of the 1963 trial: the German leaders of Sk-10a were frequently mentioned and the prosecutor concluded his indictment by mentioning them again. Mazrukho's film returned repeatedly to a photograph of Kurt Christmann (Ill. 7), found in one of the volumes of the investigative file, duly stamped and countersigned (as part of an interrogation in which a witness was presumably asked to identify him). That page was shown at minute 6'44. The voice over intoned: “There he is, Kurt Christmann, leader of SS-Sonderkommando 10a, Obersturmbannführer...” A minute later, Christmann's face was seen again in close-up, at the end of a brief sequence describing the murderous course (with numbers) of his troops. The voice-over then caustically noted his situation in 1963: “That is who the peaceful estate agent is.” Christmann reappeared at mn 22, to close a sequence on the argument offered by the major Nazi criminals at Nuremberg and then in Jerusalem—obedience to orders. “Ask Christmann, he will explain his atrocities by saying that he followed Eichmann's orders...” Finally, at min. 22'44 his face is superimposed on a freight car in a sequence explaining that all the Nazis and their local acolytes were first and foremost looters:

Moreover, they are all, from top to bottom, obsessed with greed. And if Hitler dreamed of dominion over the world, of the “living space” from Africa to the Urals—not less—if Goering stole lands, hard coal and entire factories... If Christmann sent to Germany stolen knitwear, radios, and filled his suitcases with gold (...) (*In the Name of the living*, voice over, min. 22'21 - 22'46)

112. See note 43.

III. 7: Christmann, in *In the Name of the Living* (1965)



a: at 6'44 and 8'55



b: at 7'38 and 22'00



c: at 22'44

Portions of the interrogations of the defendants shown in live action in the film aimed to establish Christmann's direct responsibility. Skripkin's interrogation in the KGB offices began with this sentence: "The leader of the SS-Sonderkommando, Christmann, personally supervised the punitive operation in Rostov-on-the-Don, and he personally shot Soviet citizens. I saw it myself" (min. 9). During Es'kov's interrogation during the trial, a judge took a particular interest in Christmann:

Who can you name precisely among the Germans, who were in Rostov, Krasnodar, Novorossiisk etc.? – The Germans? – Yes, Christmann in particular. – I know Christmann. – What was his role in Rostov, Krasnodar? Did he personally participate in the executions? – He took part in all the mass executions. He did not go to minor executions. – Only in mass executions? – He always went to mass executions, to executions of prisoners of war. – Well, were there any major operations in Novorossiisk, Rostov? – Yes, there were. – Did he go there? – Yes, he did. – Did he personally shoot? In Krasnodar? – Yes, he did. He shot with a machine gun. He borrowed it from the driver and shot. Sometimes he shot with a pistol. (*In the Name of the living*, direct sound, min. 10'45-11'44)

Ginzburg's *Bez dna* went further, opening with six pages of captured Nazi documents: extracts from instructions to the Sonderkommandos, an instruction from the Wehrmacht command, a communication from an SS officer on the use of gas vans dated 1942, and documents on the occupation (threatening notices to the population, letters from collaborators, etc.). A long chapter is devoted to Christmann (p. 25-51) and another to a fictitious conversation with Walter Bierkamp, the leader of Einsatzgruppe D who reportedly had committed suicide in 1945: "Razgovor s Val'terom Birkampom [Discussion with Walter Bierkamp]" (p. 89-107). In contrast, Mazrukho's film remains very factual, just stating Christmann's involvement in the crimes. For an intriguing reason, the film did not use the trophy documents discovered by Ginzburg in the archives, a practice that was common in Soviet films on Nazi crimes.¹¹³

113. See Irina Tcherneva's article in this volume, and the films: *Narod zvinuvachue* [The people accuse], dir. V. Sichevskii, 1959 (TsDKFFA, n° 2021); *Mi ne zabudemo* [We do not forget], dir. I. Gol'dshtein, 1960 (TsDKFFA, n° 2225); *Liudi s chernymi dushami* [Men with a dark soul], dir. Petr Shamshur, 1962 (BGAKFFD, n° 1133); *Zhertvy obviniaut* [The victims accuse], dir.

But the 1963 trial and the works of the two artists asserted something else: fascism had not died in 1945. Despite the tragedy of 1939-1945 it was raising its head in the land where it was born in the 1920s, (West) Germany. As Ginzburg noted in his 12 October article, it was a “process” linking the horrors of war to the resurgence of neo-Nazism in a FRG, which had been remilitarizing since 1955, and in a world with atomic weapons. This link between the peril of the present and the crimes of the past had been appreciated but also corrected by the evaluators of *Price of Ashes* as early as 1961-1962:

Today, the question of Germany’s destiny is inextricably linked to that of the destiny of peace in the center of Europe. Whether we look at the lessons of the German people’s recent past or at what is happening in Germany today, the division and struggle of opposing forces in Germany jumps to the fore; a struggle which, as in the past, has gone beyond the borders of that country to become a major international problem requiring a rapid resolution. From this point of view, the book *Price of Ashes*, without claiming to be an exhaustive treatment of all the questions relating to the German theme, contains rich material on which a correct representation of current events in Germany is established (...) [Concerning West German fascism:] *This way of presenting the situation does not correspond to our current political work. If we are to speak of the trends in the ruling circles of the FRG, it must be said that they reveal more and more clearly and brutally dangerous aspects reminiscent of German politics on the eve of the Second World War. Today the main danger to peace lies in the revival of militarism and revanchism in West Germany. The former fascists, Nazis and the many neo-Nazi organizations that found refuge and a voice in the FRG are today behaving primarily as militarists and revanchists. This is what we have to talk about.*¹¹⁴

Following this criticism, Ginzburg complied, both in the scenario of *In the Name of the Living* and in *Bezдна*. Beyond the demands of censorship, we can wonder over the impact of his trip to the FRG in 1963, as the aforementioned essays from that summer testify. We find in the film made with Mazrukho several motifs that have already appeared in these travel chronicles, gathered together in a long sequence of the film (min. 13’17 to 17’57). The latter was structured around the opening question: “But what are you thinking about, you who are living today in Hamburg, Munich, Stuttgart, Wuppertal? Are you disgusted by the Nazi past?” This idea already haunted the Ginzburg articles of summer 1963. The sequence then alternated images of Adenauer giving a speech, the voice-over of which explained that he was exonerating the former soldiers of the Wehrmacht from any responsibility,¹¹⁵ images of Nazi crimes contradicting this assertion, images of the futile life of the West Germans

Irina Zhukovskaia, Petr Shamshur, 1962 (RGAKFD, n° 18433); *Mogily ne molchat* [The tombs do not remain silent], dir. Petr Shamshur, 1963 (RGAKFD n° 19097).

114. RGALI, f. 1234, op. 19, d. 362, l. 7-9: V. Krashennikov’s (from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) evaluation of the manuscript, 9 Feb. 1962 (emphasis added).

115. Which Ginzburg attended in Bonn on 17 June 1963: “Poezdka v Zapadnuu Germaniiu: Segodniashnii den’,” 1 Aug. 1963.

in 1963 against a jazzy musical background, and views of the new, well-equipped Stuttgart prison that the voice-over contrasted with the barracks of Auschwitz. Then the sound atmosphere changed: a solemn organ passage accompanied the reading of verses by the West German poet Hans Magnus Enzensberger, which the voice-over described as “lines filled with bitter resentment against those whose conscience and memory are swollen with fat.” Ginzburg claims he knew the poet personally, translating him regularly, and described him as one of the few people who were truly aware of the danger that was brewing in West Germany.¹¹⁶ The musical inflection accompanied pictures of Walter Kehrler on weekends in the countryside with his family, radiating a sense of well-being. His material prosperity was then underlined by the photograph of his café (whose address was given), the Kehrler Café; the voice-over inquired about the initial financing, since its owner was one of the murderers and looters of the Sk-10a.¹¹⁷ While Kehrler enjoyed impunity in Stuttgart, the voice-over continued, shameful proceedings were being brought in the same country against antifascists, and in some cases those who tried them were former Nazis. The sequence ended with martial music and pictures illustrating these statements (Ill. 8):

A bunch of revanchists. Aren't they those gentlemen who were amusing themselves once in the sand quarry of Rostov, near the burial trenches of Novorossiisk and Krasnodar?... But today's revanchism is not merely bunches of the remaining Hitlerite “veterans.” This is the present Minister of Defense, von Hassel... military exercises... missiles... tank operations. Troops of the Bundeswehr... Who are they going to fight against? Here is the geography of revanchism: an official “map of Germany” published nowadays in the FRG. Redefine the boundaries! In drei Teile! Into three parts?! Niemals! Never!

These images came directly from Ginzburg's article of 27 July 1963.¹¹⁸

In his initial January 1964 film scenario the screenwriter planned to contrast terrible Soviet trophy images and archival footage with excerpts from postwar “West German” films and TV shows, or illustrations from recent books on the war and the SS. In these films in particular, he remembered the

fascist generals, who were skillfully turned by skilled film actors into good-natured pappas; fascist officers, made-up into the operatic Lohengrins; repulsive Gestapo scoundrels, who, according to the scripts and the director's interpretation, were turned into stupid executive servants; pages of textbooks on which West German school children study the history of the war: “... harsh measures against partisan gangs were necessary...” It turns out that none of them—Hitler's generals, the SS, nor even Canaris—killed anyone, did not hang anyone, they did not even start the war; here is a newspaper headline: “Is Germany the only one guilty of this war?!”¹¹⁹

116. Ginzburg, “Poezdka v Zapadnuiu Germaniiu: Poeziia i politika,” 15 Aug. 1963.

117. An assertion made previously in his last “Poezdka v Zapadnuiu Germaniiu” articles, and in “Poslednii schet,” 162.

118. Ginzburg, “Poezdka v Zapadnuiu Germaniiu,” 27 July 1963.

119. Ginzburg, “Poslednii schet,” 161.

III. 8: The sequence on revanchism from *In the Name of the Living* (1965)



Ginzburg also contemplated for a time to oppose Nazi barbarism with images of high German culture: the architectural ensembles of beautiful Munich, the antiques preserved in Bavaria, the two picture galleries—the Old and the New—where the visitor could admire Hieronymus Bosch or the most contemporary abstract painters...¹²⁰ This would have suggested that the most beautiful works of art were powerless to influence the Nazi mentality, an idea developed in his article, “Excerpts from German Notebooks. Genius and Evil,” published in 1961 and reprinted in *The Price of Ashes* (1962).¹²¹

The reality of the neo-Nazi peril, *pace* Ginzburg and the evaluators of his texts, also explained the appeal addressed at the end of *In the Name of the Living* to Western opinions, whose ignorance and willful blindness Ginzburg deplored:

Wuppertal, 26 Zunftstrasse: You, who live in this house, should know that you live under the same roof with SS man Kurt Trimbon, the direct organizer of the Eisk children’s massacre. (...) Murderer Ivan Zalesskii has settled in the FRG. He works for the anti-Soviet radio station in Frankfurt am Main. If you happen to listen to the Frankfurt radio, you should know that Zalesskii’s voice is the one of the SS Sonderkommando 10a. (*In the Name of the Living*, voice-over, 37’30 - 38’10)

120. *Ibid.*, 159.

121. Ginzburg, “Iz ‘nemetskikh zapisok.’ Genii zlodeistvo,” *Sovetskaia Kul’tura*, 2 Feb. 1961, 4.

Of course, it was an opportunity to, *inter alia*, scratch the Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty channel that some Soviet listeners managed to pick up.

In *Bezdna*, it was the chapter on Bierkamp that played this role of a spark, of revelation of the contemporary danger. In it, Ginzburg imagined the head of Einsatzgruppe D meditating aloud on what the Nazis should have done better in 1939-1945 in order to win the war, and cynically enjoying the contemporary context in the FRG, which was so favorable to people of his kind. The character stressed in particular that it was the atomic weapon that the Third Reich had lacked to win the war.¹²² The chapter ended with an imaginary trial, allowing Ginzburg to wax ironically about West German justice (without naming it), by placing these words at the end of Bierkamp's plea for mercy:

Gentlemen of the court! The events that were the subject of the judicial proceedings in this trial have long since become a part of history. History has passed its judgment—the judgment of time, regimes, governments, leaving aside the actions of individuals, for it was not people who determined the nature of time, but on the contrary, time determined the nature of people. And if history turned out to be lenient to individuals, to these grains of sand caught in the whirlpool of time, then I can calmly await your verdict, confident in your justice, in your unwillingness to increase the number of victims of this war by one more victim.¹²³

The concept of past-in-the-present was so close to the writer's heart that after making a relatively classic documentary film with Mazrukho, he approached the brand new and very daring ETK with the aim of making a fiction out of *Bezdna*.¹²⁴ The project did not succeed for bureaucratic reasons, but the file on this film project shows that Ginzburg had thought of a narrative process in which the author would go back and forth between 1942-1943 and 1962-1963.¹²⁵ The studio editor found the idea very promising. It touched on an "immense and thorny" theme and was based on very rich information. Above all, he felt that the proposal proved that "it will correctly deal with the main and most difficult problem: all the events will be projected onto our daily lives today and for this reason the film can be fully qualified as a film on a contemporary theme." Not only because the characters of the war would appear in the contemporary world, "but because the film arouses hatred of today's fascists, of today's revanchists, and it will allow us to appreciate the psychological and moral

122. Ginzburg, *Bezdna*, 100.

123. *Ibid.*, 107.

124. On the ETK, see Irina Tcherneva, "Imiter le marché, une recette pour le cinéma soviétique ? L'histoire du Studio artistique expérimental (1965-1976)," *Cahiers du Monde russe*, 54, 3 (2013): 589-621. Eadem, "Rynok protiv plana? Eksperimenty v organizatsii i oplate truda v sovetskom kino (1961-1976) [A market against the plan? Experiments in labor organization and payment in the Soviet film industry (1961-1976)]," *Soviet History Discussion Papers* 7 & 9 (2015): https://prae.perspectivia.net/publikationen/shdp/cherneva_rynok

125. Mosfilm Archive, f. 2453, op. 1, d. 178, l. 13-19 (here l. 14): meeting of the Scriptwriting College devoted to the first version of the plot scenario, 12 Apr. 1965, and l. 57-59: report on the mission to Krasnodar, 21 June 1965, received and filed on 28 June 1965.

value of the acts and behavior of the characters from a historical point of view which is at the same time the point of view of our contemporaries.”¹²⁶

Thus Ginzburg as well as Mazrukho re-used a motif already elaborated for public attention since 1943 (Krasnodar and Kharkov trials). But by making it an actual threat, they conferred on it a new significance. Moreover, Ginzburg went further, touching on politically sensitive issues.

Ginzburg’s Daring

Collaborators as “moral victims” of the occupation

In his proposal to the ETK, Ginzburg claimed:

(...) I set myself the goal to examine in more detail, from the moral and “aesthetic” point of view, this situation called “fascist occupation.” In the course of this “process,” totally different human destinies must meet: the vectors of occupation (with their psychology and the “ideological basis” of the evil they have committed), the fighters against the occupation (communists, Soviet patriots), the victims of the occupation—physical and moral victims. By “moral” victims, I refer to those individuals who proved incapable of resisting evil and who, in the hope of escaping death, destroyed many human lives, including their own... This is how the theme of betrayal should appear in the film. I want to show how individuals are sucked into the abyss of crime, individuals who at first did not think of themselves as criminals, but who, by making the first insignificant compromise with their conscience, a small “psychological” betrayal, turn into bitter enemies of our people, into professional murderers for whom crime becomes banal, an everyday job, and for whom there is and never will be forgiveness (...)¹²⁷

This view of betrayal, and of perpetrators, casts a timely light in retrospect on some intriguing aspects of the *Bezdna*. While detailing and denouncing the crimes committed by these men, Ginzburg admits he was surprised by their apparent banality. Nothing on the surface revealed their terrible past. In this, the author differed from almost all the descriptions of perpetrators found in the USSR in the press, in political essays, etc. Instead, he came closer to the interpretation of collaboration offered in two fiction films of the time: *Gosudarstvennyi prestupnik* [State criminal] (N. Rozantsev, 1964) and *Ia vse pomniu, Richards—Es visu atceros, Richards!* [I remember everything, Richards] (R. Kalniņš, 1966). The latter film in particular developed a nuanced and complex vision of the Latvian legionnaires than earlier works had.¹²⁸ *In the Name of the Living* reproduced some of the impressions Ginzburg experienced during his encounters with each of the defendants, as described

126. Ibid., I. 9-10.

127. Mosfilm Archives, f. 2453, op. 1, d. 178, I. 4-6: Proposal for a fiction film by Lev Ginzburg, n. d. (July 1964).

128. Tcherneva, Denis, “Je me souviens de tout, Richards.”

in *Bezdna*. The live action segments showed the differences in attitude between Skripkin and Veikh, overwhelmed, resigned, and almost pitiful, on the one hand, and the indifferent and insolent Es'kov or the incredibly blasé Sukhov, on the other. Sukhov's testimony on the stand revealed particularly atrocious facts: the extraction of gold crowns from the mouths of the dead, the gas murder of the children of Eisk. Yet he narrated all this in a playful and exaggeratedly expressive tone, shrugging his shoulders, raising his eyebrows, waving his chin provocatively, as if he were telling an anecdote to a friend. The judge could not hide his consternation (Ill. 9).

Ill. 9: Sukhov's attitude in court, and its effect



a: « I vse ! [There is it] »
concluded Sukhov after
an ignominious description



b: shrugging shoulders



c: the appalled judge

The central issue for Ginzburg was to unravel the mystery of the fatal choice, of those few minutes when a Soviet man with an ordinary past chose to betray his people rather than fight the enemy. This questioning was only barely touched upon in the film, in two short sequences asking “Why?” (min. 21'00 - 21'40 and 34'18 - 34'44). *Bezdna*, on the other hand, returned repeatedly to this topic in the chapters concerning the defendants Skripkin, Es'kov, Sukhov, Zhirukhin, and the trial itself, but also in three other chapters on meetings that Ginzburg had during his research, which are absent from the film. A comparison of the annotated manuscript kept in the archives and the published work allows us to identify what disturbed the reviewers. Ginzburg chooses to base the chapter about Christmann on documents, but also on the account of a certain Tomka (pseudonym) who had been arrested to be shot but whom the Sk-10a chief made his concubine captive in Krasnodar.¹²⁹ After the war, she had been convicted of treason. Ginzburg writes he had met Tomka in Moscow one winter (presumably 1963-1964) and he was struggling to hide his pity for the poor woman who “still had not understood what had happened to her.”¹³⁰ Two other collaborators who were not killers were mentioned in the book, and again Ginzburg's pity for these ruined lives was expressed in the manuscript. In one case, the author managed to

129. Christmann reacted to this chapter in 1967, claiming there was no such captive “spouse,” but maybe a Tomka-housecleaner (thanks to J. Söhner for this information, exchange dated 5 December 2020).

130. Ginzburg, *Bezdna*, 49. The sentence on Tomka's incomprehension was removed from the book at the express request of a reviewer: RGALI, f. 618 (journal *Znamia*), op. 18, d. 366, l. 58.

retain his wording. An actress who had continued to perform during the occupation (and had also been condemned upon liberation) had told her story so convincingly that the author confessed to involuntarily feeling the urge to help her out of pity.¹³¹ In the chapter “The Man from under the bed,” on the other hand, the author had to surrender. He expressed his contempt, but also his pity for the man who had feared justice so much that he had lived in hiding until years after the amnesty... for which he had been eligible. The proofreader demanded that Ginzburg withdraw a sentence, present in the 13 September article in *Molot*: too many nuances introduced into this traitor’s character. “One day an old acquaintance came to find him at home—a doctor, wife of a partisan detachment commander. He hid her in his house.”¹³²

As for the “torturers,” the reviewer tended to be inflexible. Ginzburg managed to retain the passage, struck below, maybe because it attested to the contempt that these men inspired even among the occupiers and other collaborators:

They were the most despised members of the detachment, even Iuriev and Görtz considered them lower than Christmann’s Alsatian dogs, even Tomka looked down on them with contempt: jackals... ~~And yet, each of them had his own fate, his own sadness and his own hopes~~ and as the most dependent (servants), the lowest on the fascist hierarchical ladder, they had their grievances against Christmann.¹³³

On the other hand, the reviewer won the case for the following passage:

I watch his blasé face, the way he [Skripkin] spins a matchbox with his clean fingers, a man who comes from the hospital [Skripkin had tuberculosis, the author informs us right after], listens to the investigator’s questions and answers obediently, in monosyllables, ~~as if he knows no inner struggle, no resistance, no desire to extricate himself from the stranglehold of the accusations, only mortal fatigue...~~¹³⁴

In his evaluation of the manuscript, Petr Kapitsa lamented that Ginzburg “allowed himself to be fascinated by the spectacle of human vileness.” He added

The confessions of the “fallen” Soviets sometimes create the impression that there were countless weak-willed inhabitants who were unable to resist and fight, that they could not act differently since they were dominated by fear, the scare of misfortune, and that the Hitlerites had no difficulty in corrupting and disarming the population of the occupied territories, both physically and morally. To avoid this, the author should here and there refer to the patriots who resisted and defeated the Hitlerites. Examples of steadfastness and courage would make the facts of life more truthful. Let the author reflect on this, without changing the style of narration.¹³⁵

131. RGALI, f. 618, op. 18, d. 373, l. 16. This passage was maintained in the book (p. 125).

132. RGALI, f. 618, op. 18, d. 366, l. 110. The sentence was removed from the book (p. 112).

133. *Ibid.*, l. 48: the passage remained in the book (p. 42).

134. The crossed-out sentence in fact disappeared from the book (p. 58). The reviewer had written something illegible in the margin about the pity it would inspire.

135. RGALI, f. 1234, op. 20, d. 292, l. 1-3 (here 1): evaluation of the manuscript by Petr Kapitsa, 12 Mar. 1965. Kapitsa came from a family of Polish (Soviet) Jews who had been party

Unsurprisingly, given Kapitsa's profile, he found the last chapter the best part of *Bezdna*, devoted to a Soviet agent who infiltrated Einsatzgruppe D, Viktor Agapov. Without this chapter "the reader would see only assassins and fascist monsters, individuals without honor or homeland. But fortunately, the world includes more good and honorable people. It is necessary to write more about them and show that there are no circumstances justifying murder, treason, and baseness."¹³⁶

The proofreader at *Znamia*, in contrast, would have liked Ginzburg to develop a clearer and more detailed discourse on the act of treason. He noted in the margin, "The text passes so quickly on this. But that is the main thing, isn't it?" next to a paragraph that said: "The unnatural character of their links with the Hitlerites aggravated the faults in each of the accused, who had not come into the world for that, were not destined to do that: to become the servants of the German fascists. A crime against nature had been committed here, against the very existence: the betrayal of the Motherland, of blood ties, of destiny..."¹³⁷

On the whole, if the author managed to defend a number of the sensitive passages, one must agree with the publisher's final opinion that, "On the advice of the publisher and the reviewers, the author has done a highly visible job on his manuscript."¹³⁸ These difficulties with the internal censorship of *Znamia* and the publisher Sovetskii Pisatel' probably explained the fears expressed by Ginzburg when he discussed the script of the planned film with the ETK. On 12 April 1965 he confessed, "I didn't know what line to follow in this book [*Bezdna*]. If you take the line of the executioners, where is the guarantee that the scenario will pass? I've already had my fingers slapped for the book. Imagine all this on screen. (...) Why did an agent appear in the story? I needed a positive hero so that they would not bother me."¹³⁹ Then he added:

I have done such an investigation before. And my thoughts and feelings were as follows: leaving from Moscow I plunged into the abyss and saw not what I imagined. So they make the fiend enter and you understand that everything is infinitely complicated. There appear thousands of problems. Of course, you can make a philosophical picture, but will such a scenario pass? On the other hand, we raise the question of the punishment of fascist criminals. We write about it in the press, protest against the amnesty and, suddenly, we put Russian traitors on trial. It doesn't embarrass you?¹⁴⁰

members since 1928. He had fought in the war, and had built his reputation as a writer largely on stories highlighting the heroism of Soviet youth during the conflict. <https://www.livelib.ru/author/327448-petr-kapitsa>, accessed 26 July 2020.

136. *Ibid.*, 1. 2.

137. RGALI, f. 618, op. 18, d. 373, l. 43.

138. RGALI, f. 1234, op. 20, d. 292, l. 8: memorandum by the editor-in-chief Ju. Riurikov, 24 Nov. 1965.

139. Mosfilm Archives, f. 2453, op. 1, d. 178, l. 14.

140. *Ibid.*, 1. 15.

Regarding these concerns, the artistic director of the Studio, Grigorii Chukhrai expressed confidence:

Let's make a deal. When you work your way forward, do not take conjunctural considerations into account. I am begging you. This is our concern. We Soviet individuals sitting here are interested in the same thing as the people are, and if you do everything honestly, convincingly, ideologically, purposefully, fairly—everyone will approve. If necessary, I will go to war myself. All we need is for these positions to be principled. (...) But at the same time, you and I cannot take up a thing that would be in accord with our conscience and the challenge. You should not take into account the opinion of an official yet. We release you from this. Do as your party conscience tells you¹⁴¹.

Chukhrai's assurance confirms that the limits were flexible during that period, between Thaw and Stagnation, and that a privileged Moscow studio like the Experimental Art Studio could dare to do things unimaginable in the Rostov documentary studio. The team also trusted Ginzburg because they had read and appreciated the manuscript for *Bezdna* and knew the author to be “perfectly and longstandingly connected to the theme of revanchism, and a fine connoisseur of contemporary West Germany.”¹⁴² In the end, Ginzburg succeeded well in suggesting in *Bezdna* his nuanced vision of collaboration, while ETK would have been quite ready to embark on a fictional film production that respected the writer's unorthodox convictions. On the other hand, Ginzburg went quite far in his writings—too far, in fact—on the question of Nazi ideology, and in particular the Holocaust.¹⁴³

Imperialism and Racism

From *The Rat-Catcher's Pipe* (1960) to *Bezdna* (1966), Lev Ginzburg became increasingly sensitive to the racist and anti-Semitic dimension of Nazi ideology, as if his research not only in Soviet archives but also in works written in German gradually had opened his eyes to the true nature of Nazism. As early as his work on

141. *Ibid.*, I. 14-15.

142. Archives de Mosfilm, f. 2453, op. 1, d. 178, I. 9-10.

143. On the complex Soviet stance towards the Holocaust and the impact of the Eichmann trial in the Soviet media, see Antonella Salomoni, *L'Union soviétique et la Shoah* (P.: La Découverte, 2008). Nathalie Moine, “Les Vivants et les morts: genèse, histoire et héritages de la documentation soviétique des crimes commis en territoire occupé, fin XIX^e-début XXI^e siècles,” Habilitation à diriger des recherches, EHESS, Paris, 2015. Nati Cantorovich, “Soviet Reactions to the Eichmann Trial: A Preliminary Investigation, 1960-1961,” *Yad Vashem Studies*, 35, 2 (2007): 103–41. Kiril Feferman, *Soviet Jewish Stepchild: The Holocaust in the Soviet Mindset, 1941-1964* (Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag Dr. Müller, 2009). V. Voisin, “Le procès de Jérusalem et la représentation de la Shoah en URSS,” in S. Lindeperg, A. Wiewiorka, eds., *Le moment Eichmann* (P.: Albin Michel, 2016) : 139-168.

The Price of Ashes, he was brought into line by one of the most prominent official writers in the USSR, V. Mikhailov of the International department of *Pravda*.¹⁴⁴

At the center of the story, the author put the “final solution to the Jewish question.” The extermination of the Jews was a prelude. Anti-Semitism, as the most common, prepared by predecessors of the Nazis, was used to distract German workers from the class struggle that was raging in Germany, to morally demoralize the masses, to train murderers and prepare entire armies capable of carrying out the devilish plans of German imperialism in relation to other countries and peoples.¹⁴⁵

Nazism was to be understood as an extreme, hyper-aggressive version of capitalist imperialism. The evocation of the war and the Nazi occupation policy should recall the policy of economic exploitation of the occupied territories, the deportation of forced laborer to the Reich (*Ostarbeiter*), the plundering of the most pitiful belongings of villagers, etc. If concentration camps were mentioned, they had to be linked directly to large German companies that exploited the prisoners’ labor (Siemens, Krupp, etc.). If killing centers were mentioned, it was imperative to denounce the industrialists who had built the deadly apparatus (Topf & Sons).

Another reviewer of *The Price of Ashes* even suggested the absence of any ideology among Nazi war criminals: “On p. 139 the author analyses the psychological mechanism of fascist fanaticism and writes: ‘The extermination of a nation is always preceded by its humiliation. The exterminator must be convinced of his intellectual and moral superiority over the one he exterminates.’ The first idea is right, but the second is questionable. The Eichmanns, all fascist assassins, did not and could not have any conviction.”¹⁴⁶ This tendency to deny the strength and nature of Nazi ideology was reflected in the corrections made to the manuscript of *Bezdnia* by *Znamia*’s proofreader. He crossed out an entire passage in which Ginzburg explained that the “wisdom” of Sk-10a’s leaders came to them from *Mein Kampf*.¹⁴⁷

The anti-Semitic dimension of Nazism was not totally obliterated in USSR.¹⁴⁸ However, it had to be seen as a secondary aspect of this extreme form of capitalism.

144. According to Fainberg, from 1945 onwards journalists and editors of the International departments of the major Soviet daily newspapers were regularly “briefed” by members of the government: Fainberg, “Notes from the Rotten West,” 45. This trend probably continued thereafter, even if the Thaw witnessed a strong liberalization of the spirit and style of journalism (ibid., 50-66).

145. RGALI, f. 1234, op. 19, d. 362, l. 18: Evaluation by V. Mikhailov of the essay *The Price of Ashes* by L. Ginzburg, addressed to A. Krivitskii (*Znamia*), n. d.

146. RGALI, f. 1234, op. 19, d. 362, l. 3-4: Evaluation by M. Gus of the manuscript *The Price of Ashes*, 12 Nov. 1961.

147. RGALI, f. 618, op. 18, d. 366, l. 49-49a. The passage disappeared from the book.

148. Salomoni, *L’Union soviétique et la Shoah*; Mordechai Altshuler, “The Holocaust in the Soviet Mass Media during the War and in the First Postwar Years Re-examined,” *Yad Vashem Studies*, 39, 2 (2011): 121-168; Jeremy Hicks, *First Films of the Holocaust: Soviet Cinema and the Genocide of the Jews, 1938-1946* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012); Karel C. Berkhoff, *Motherland in Danger: Soviet Propaganda During World War II* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012); Nathalie Moine, “Les Vivants et les morts.”

In *The Name of the Living* perfectly respected this orthodoxy. It described and evoked the Holocaust without ever pronouncing the word “Jew”¹⁴⁹ but devoted a sequence to the economic rapacity of the Nazis, whose text we have quoted above. In his publications Ginzburg was more daring. In *The Price of Ashes* he had already given a description of Nazi genocidal anti-Semitism that was unique in the USSR in 1962. Of course, he had also had to bow to Mikhailov’s remarks, presenting the extermination of Jewish communities as a “prelude” to the extermination of the Slavs. Nevertheless, a long passage in the chapter “Delo Eikhmana” was devoted to the exposition of the racial theories—especially anti-Semitic—of the Nazis.¹⁵⁰

In *Bezdna*, Ginzburg took a further step. Admittedly, he accepted the official thesis on Nazism by developing the idea that the occupiers were above all looters anxious to send as much booty as possible to Germany.¹⁵¹ He was also careful to mention the diversity of Soviet victims: Party and state activists, resistance fighters, prisoners of war, innocent civilians described as “partisans”, and Jews. This was how they were presented in the indictment of the trial, reproduced in part on pages 22-24. In the enumerations of victims, Jews were mentioned among the categories noted above, or other national categories: Russians, Ukrainians... However, several passages in the book sketched a different picture. For example, the careful description of the operation in Rostov on 10-11 August 1942 included the notice to the Jews ordering them to assemble, their conveying to Zmievka balka, and the testimony of Skripkin on the mass execution.¹⁵² Trophy documents reproduced at the beginning of the book referred to the genocide. The most damning was an undated (probably late 1941) excerpt from a report from Sk-10a to its hierarchy: “... I report that the towns of Mariupol and Taganrog have been completely cleansed of their Jews.”¹⁵³

The boldest chapter, however, remained the chapter on Walter Bierkamp. It opened with two introductory pages on the individual: extracts from the wanted criminal’s identification card, an expression of Ginzburg’s doubts about Bierkamp’s suicide in 1945 (the author suggested that the criminal was hiding under a false name in the FRG), an evocation of the archival documents consulted by the author, in particular documents signed by Bierkamp as the head of the Einsatzgruppe D. The chapter continued with a ten-page imaginary monologue by Bierkamp and ended with the statement that Bierkamp could have made if he had been tried in the FRG. This original narrative process enabled Ginzburg to leave for a while the position of committed narrator he had assumed since the beginning of the *Bezdna* (frequent use of the “I”, recounting his research, his meetings, sharing his impressions) and communicate daring ideas under the guise of irony with regard to the Nazi leaders and their self-justifications.

149. Voisin, “‘Au Nom des Vivants’ ...,” 402-407.

150. Voisin, “Le procès de Jerusalem,” 166-167.

151. Ginzburg, *Bezdna*, 37-38.

152. *Ibid.*, 54-57.

153. *Ibid.*

Thus, Ginzburg suggested that the Nazis did not, even in 1963, consider their actions as unprecedented crimes, but as part of a misunderstood innovative project. The genocide of the Jews was presented by the fictitious Bierkamp as a “strategic error” because it was too radical. The character claimed (like Eichmann, in *The Price of Ashes*) not to be a “biological anti-Semite”, but rather an opportunist. The Jews were an enemy against whom the nation could be united. And it was “bad luck” that they were the guinea pigs in an experiment designed to be applied on a much larger scale—against the Russians, the Poles, the French, in short, millions of individuals and diverse peoples (p. 95). The extermination was too radical, precipitating the coalition against the Reich: according to Ginzburg, this idea would have been widespread in many Nazi circles after the war, and persisted even among individuals he met in the FRG. Hitler’s other strategic error, according to the fictitious Bierkamp, had been the invasion of “Russia” in 1941. Too early, because Great Britain had not been defeated in 1940, this campaign had been very badly conducted politically. “In the occupation policy, we have disregarded the reasonable advice of some experts who proposed that we involve the population more widely in cooperation with us (...)” (p. 97). Essentially, the Nazi project consisted of pure exploitation of peoples considered inferior, which explained the elimination of chronically ill and psychiatric patients, old people, and even sick children, as in the orphanage in Eisk. The character also asserted the existence of a killer in every human being, a human “quality” that had been “liberated” by Nazi ideology. Even more threatening for the present day of 1963: Bierkamp argued that nuclear weapons would have been the way to victory, and that the Bierkampian spirit was not dead, but remained in a part of contemporary youth.

In the final part of the chapter, Bierkamp’s plea at his fictitious 1963 trial, as Ginzburg imagined it, revealed a completely different man. Disavowing the ideas set forth in his earlier monologue, the “defendant” now presented himself as a victim of Nazism, a manipulated man who had only arrived on the front line in 1942, after Ohlendorf had led the massacre of Jews, Gypsies, Communists, and antifascists. It was Ohlendorf who had trained the men of the EG-D to kill, and subsequently the men of the EG-D continued their activity while keeping Bierkamp in the dark. Bierkamp had tried, by learning about some of the exactions, to stop the extermination. But he was only a soldier like any other; he had to obey orders from on high...

It is conceivable that the reviewers of *Bezдна* demanded revisions to this chapter—the original draft of which we have no knowledge—and that they were embarrassed by several points. Apart from the description of Nazi ideology, it was Ginzburg’s presentation of the autonomy of the individual that bothered them. The proofreader had thus wished to delete an entire passage in which Bierkamp asserted that individual heroism could not exist in a system in which official doctrine validated the crime. It is surprising that the writer managed to preserve this passage¹⁵⁴. His colleague Krymov

154. RGALI, f. 618, op. 18, d. 366, l. 131: it was maintained in the book, p. 107.

of *Literaturnaia Gazeta* had worked, in early 1963, to deconstruct the idea of the individual tossed around like a grain of sand by historical events.¹⁵⁵

Ginzburg's daring, albeit set in a cautionary tale, was tolerated in 1962-1967. In 1970, on the other hand, he was brutally called to order following the publication of his *Otherworldly Encounters: From a Munich Notebook*, first serialized in 1969 in *Novyi Mir*—again starring Kurt Christmann. The book, published in 1970, reported conversations Ginzburg had had with such personalities as “Albert Speer, Baldur von Schirach (former leader of the Hitler Jugend), Hjalmar Horace Greeley Schacht (Nazi minister of economics in 1934-37), Hermann Esser (member of the NS Party n°2) and also with Eva Braun's sisters, Himmler's son-in-law, and others.”¹⁵⁶ He was brutally attacked in *Pravda* on 13 April 1970 by the deputy head of the Propaganda Department of the Central Committee, A. Dmitriuk himself. Maxim Shrayer hypothesized that the book was used as a pretext to place Ginzburg in disgrace at a time when relations with Israel had been broken off since 1967, and that Ginzburg, as a Jew of the nomenklatura, should serve as an example to remind everyone of what was and was not allowed to be said about the Holocaust. The explanation is quite plausible.¹⁵⁷ But the basic criticism *expressed* by the senior official of the Central Committee was that the vision of Nazism set out in the book did not help “denounce the social and class nature of fascism.”

Conclusion

The archival situation did not allow a definitive assessment of the Krasnodar investigation and trial. But its media coverage showed some significant changes in the way justice for Nazi crimes was publicized in the USSR from the 1940s to the 1960s, after Stalin's death and the Jerusalem trial. This form of justice remained highly political, and its mediatization did, as well. The individual guilt of each defendant had become, however, an actual concern, the retransmission of evidence of guilt being an essential aspect of the media coverage, even if the absence of controversial debate and critical challenge to this evidence persisted.

The study also goes against several preconceived ideas about the relationship between arts professionals and the police and justice professionals. It confirms the margin of freedom that artists sometimes enjoyed during the Thaw, and for a few years after. It illustrates various ways of filming a trial (1963 and 1965) and even more so the variety of possible retransmissions of the judicial act—its echoes—from simultaneous rebroadcast within the urban space to the high-literary short story of a committed author. This case also shows how the same artist retransmitted his vision of the trial depending on whether he was acting as a journalist, screenwriter or author.

155. B(oris) Krymov, “Chto mozhet chelovek?” [What can a man do?], *LG* (21 Feb. 1963): 4.

156. Shrayer, “Lev Ginzburg, Soviet Translator.”

157. *Ibidem*.

The comparison of Ginzburg's wishes with the film made by Mazrukho and the possibilities later deployed by the Experimental Art Studio confirms the importance of the political resources available to the various actors in this story with regard to the limits of the speakable and the demonstrable in 1963-1967. The crucial role of a very committed artist, Ginzburg, thus overcame a number of institutional and ideological obstacles until the writer finally paid the price for his persistent commitment. Ginzburg's highly daring depiction of wartime collaboration and depiction—quite uniquely—of Nazi ideology and the Holocaust make his works singular, privileged though he was in literary circles. At the same time, the study of the various “censors” (editors, publishers, reviewers) revealed a plurality of views and the absence of definitive limits in the treatment of these topics.

Finally, it should be stressed that the intensity of the media coverage of this trial, Ginzburg's particular role in German-Soviet relations and the confidential steps taken in parallel by the Prosecutor-General of the USSR undoubtedly contributed to the (re)opening of investigations in the West against the German criminals implicated in the trial and tried in the FRG between 1972 and 1980.

Università di Bologna

Dipartimento di storia, cultura, civiltà (DiSCI)

vanessadenise.voisin@unibo.it