

Shaping the Soviet Mass Reader, Moulding Italian Literature Publishing Strategies in the URSS between Thaw and Stagnation

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Abstract The purpose of this article is to illustrate the different phases of the Soviet editorial process in order to understand on which basis and through which strategies the publication of foreign literature texts was ideologically oriented to the formation of a mass readership. The main object of this study is the analysis of the troubled publishing history of the anthology *The Twentieth Century Italian Novella (Ital'yanskaya novella XX veka, 1969)*, which unfolded during a significant decade (1958-1968), at the turn between the Khrushchev era and the Brezhnev era and against the background of the crisis of the European left, when many European intellectuals changed their position toward Soviet policies. By analysing a corpus composed of critical reviews (*obzory*) and editorial documents (analyses, critical evaluations and editorial notes) used by the Soviet publishing house *Khudozhestvennaya literatura*, I will focus on the changes made to the anthology in order to highlight the delicate relationship between the editorial strategies and the political dynamics aimed at a broader control of cultural production in the transition period between Thaw (*ottepel'*) and Stagnation (*zastoi*).

Keywords Reader-response criticism. Soviet mass reader. Italian literature. Soviet criticism. Censorship in the USSR.

Summary 1 Introduction. – 2 Publishing Foreign Literature in the USSR as an Antidote to Cultural Isolation. – 3 Reception of Italian Literature during the Thaw: Neorealism vs Anticommunism. – 4 *Ital'yanskaya novella XX veka*: Microhistory of a Publication. – 5 The Mass Reader as the Target of the Ideological Critical Discourse.



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1 Introduction

Скучные книги происходят от скучного читателя, ибо в книгах действует ищущая тоска читателя, а не уместность сочинителя. (А. Платонов, Чевенгур)

In the Soviet Union, the reader was considered the recipient not only of a book, but also of a social transformation process which, through the written world, aimed to the creation of the *Homo Sovieticus*. He/she ceased to be an individual and became a collective entity, as if to say a ‘reader-people’ (*chitatel’-narod*) (Dobrenko 1997, 11). The attention paid by the institutions to the creation of the mass reader (*massovyi chitatel’*) found its ultimate expression in the control exercised on the entire process of cultural production and diffusion, which aim was to promote the “ideological education and the cultural growth of the Soviet people” (*ideinoe vospitanie i kul’turnyi rost sovetskikh lyudei*) (Postanovlenie Komissii TsK KPSS 2000a, 33).¹ In literature, the complex censorship system included several institutions that had the task of ensuring the proper ideological orientation of literary works. Authorities such as the Glavlit (*Glavnoe upravlenie po okhrane gosudarstvennykh tain v pechaty pri SM SSSR*) and the Ideological Commission of the Central Committee (CC) of the Communist Party of Soviet Union (CPSU) (*Komissiya TsK KPSS po voprosam ideologii, kul’tury i mezhdunarodnym partiinym svyazyam*) held primarily repressive functions, while the programmatic aspect of their office was aided by literary criticism. Within this hierarchical system, the editorial staff of the State publishing houses (Goslitizdat, Khudozhestvennaya literatura, Inoizdat, Detgiz) and of the main literary magazines (*Inostrannaya literatura, Znamiya, Zvezda, Voprosy literatury, Novyi Mir*) carried out an important function of preventive censorship by directly exercising their control on the different phases of the publishing process: they guaranteed in first instance the compliance with the prescriptions of censorship, adapting the literary works in order to give them a chance to pass through the sieve of the higher institutions (Zalambani 2009, 135-43). As for the publication of foreign literature, the censorship practices were often complemented by some critical and ideological domestication of the content, which aim was to adapt the given texts to the needs of the Soviet literary system, according to the dogmas of Socialist Realism (*sotsrealizm*). This control, therefore, had a dual purpose: on the one hand, the application of censorship; on the other hand, the publication of the works. We should not underestimate the fact that, in some cases, thanks to the critical expedients of the editorial staff,

¹ When not otherwise specified, the translation is mine.

works that were ideologically distant from the dogmas of Socialist Realism could be published in the USSR.² An eloquent proof of such *modus operandi* is offered by the critic Tssetsiliya Kin,³ who, in a letter written in 1982 to the journalist Livio Zanetti announcing the release of a novel by L. Sciascia, regretted having written a mediocre afterword and explained that she had done so with the only aim to ensure the publication of the book: “The volume of Sciascia that I edited finally came out with my mediocre afterword – I already apologized to him, I think he understood that I had only one purpose, that is to publish the book”.⁴

The need to ‘improve’ the works of foreign literature with an adequate critical introduction had been underlined also by the Ideological Commission. Having found a few methodological errors in the phases of selection and publication of foreign works, with the decree *Ob ustranении nedostatkov v izdании i retsenzirovanii inostrannoї khudozhestvennoї literatury* (1958), the Commission proposed to strengthen the executive staff of the publishing houses’ editorial boards:

Criticism does a poor job in disclosing the process of growth and consolidation of the world’s progressive literature and in getting readers acquainted with the work of leading foreign writers. However, some critics of the Soviet Union glorify the works of bourgeois writers, they do not provide a comprehensive critical evaluation of their creativity, which leads to an incorrect orientation of readers. [...]

[Our aim is] to force the Ministry of Culture (com. Mikhailov) and the heads of foreign literature’s publishing houses, to reconsider the practice of planning and producing the works of foreign authors, to eliminate the existing shortcomings and mistakes, to strengthen the staff of foreign literature editorial boards, to take measures to strengthen the activities of the editorial boards of publishing houses and to improve their role in planning the release of literature. (Postanovlenie Komissii TsK KPSS 2000b, 46)

2 In this regard it is enough to quote the case of I. Calvino’s *Cosmicomics* (*Cosmicomiche*, 1965), one of the first post-modern novels ever published in the Soviet Union due to the critical contribution of S. Oshero. His foreword strategically offered a Marxist interpretation which allowed a work that was very distant from the ideological and aesthetic impositions of socialist realism to be printed in the USSR (*Kosmicheskies istorii*, Moskva: Molodaya gvardiya, 1968) (see Sicari 2016).

3 Tssetsiliya Kin (1906-92) was a contributing writer and a critic. Since 1956 she was a consultant specialized in Italian literature for the journal *Inostrannaya literatura*. She also worked as consultant for the Italian section of the Foreign committee of the Union of Soviet Writers.

4 Moskva, Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv literatury i iskusstva (RGALI), f. 2803, op. 2, d. 200, l. 34. *Pis’ma Kin Ts. I. k raznym litsam*.

Therefore, the editorial boards carefully looked after each aspect of the preparation of the volumes to be submitted to censorship, from the selection of texts to be translated to the drafting of an appropriate paratextual apparatus that would suggest the correct interpretation to the reader. In case of foreign works, the editorial efforts to ensure the publication a correct ideological orientation were even more efficient, especially regarding the literature of the so-called 'capitalist countries'. In its turn, the scrupulousness of such editorial work was the object of the equally meticulous attention of the Ideological Commission:

employees of some publishing houses and of the Ministry of culture of the USSR show a lack of seriousness toward the publication of foreign literary works translated, resulting in ideological errors made in this area. (Postanovlenie Komissii TsK KPSS 2000a, 38)

March 1953, soon after the death of Stalin, witnessed the beginning of a period of relative weakening of the Party's control of the press and, in general, of the cultural production, first of all the literary one. After Khrushchev's speech at the XX Congress of the CPSU (14-25 February 1956), a greater freedom of expression became programmatic, with the aim to put in place a deep change in the Soviet society. Just two years later, however, the campaign of denigration against Pasternak - guilty of having published abroad his novel *Doctor Zhivago* (1957)⁵ - once again revealed the true colors (which had not changed at all) of the repressive force controlling the literary production.

The reasons of this shift back after the good intentions expressed by Khrushchev at the XX Congress must be traced down to the difficult international situation in which the USSR found itself in 1956: the year began with the promise of more freedom, but ended with the tragic events in Hungary, jeopardizing any confidence in the possibility of a real transformation of the Soviet political system. That year - which started under the best auspices but ended with a new disappointment - opened a crisis that had negative impact not only on the USSR, but also on the European left wing. European intellectuals felt betrayed by the coercive methods adopted by the Soviet Union to quell the Hungarian uprising and protested bitterly against the leadership of the CPSU, which qualified the protest as 'counterrevolutionary'. The Russian tanks in Budapest marked point of no return and many leading figures of the left-wing *intelligentsiya* distanced themselves from

⁵ For a thorough discussion of the topic, see: Gardzonio, Rechchia 2012; Gullotta 2012-13; Mancosu 2013; Zveteremich, Pietro A. (1987). "La riabilitazione di Pasternak". *Giornale della libreria*, 9. URL <http://www.russianecho.net/contributi/speciali/zveteremich/pasternak.html> (2019-03-17).

the Communist party. The same scenario repeated itself even in a more striking way after the events of the Prague Spring (1968), which exacerbated the crisis of the European left. However, even taking into consideration this difficult situation and the intensification of anti-Soviet positions on the international level, the end of the Thaw was still to come, and several years would pass before the beginning of the long winter of Leonid Brezhnev's era, historically known as the Stagnation (*zastoi*). In 1964 Khrushchev was dismissed, but Brezhnev's rise to power initially did not put a stop to the Thaw that began in 1953. The return to a highly centralized and hostile to all liberties system gradually took place, reaching its peak in 1966, with the staging of the trial against Andrei Sinyavsky and Yuli Daniel,⁶ charged with 'anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda' for publishing their works abroad. However, usually the official end of the Thaw is placed in 1970, when Aleksandr Tvardovsky was forced to resign from the post of the chief editor in the literary magazine *Novyi Mir* which, under his leadership (1950-54; 1958-70), had been a landmark for the liberal Soviet *intelligentsiya*.⁷ In this perspective, it is extremely significant that the Thaw – whose beginnings were marked by a greater freedom of the mass-media – ended with the conviction of two writers and the campaign of denigration against the literary magazine's editor.

2 Publishing Foreign Literature in the USSR as an Antidote to Cultural Isolation

The breach in the relations between the USSR and the *intelligentsiya* of the European left-wing in the late fifties was a result not only of the Soviet invasion of Hungary, but also of the diffusion of Khrushchev's secret report in the West (1956)⁸ and – in the field of cultural policies – of the punitive measures against B. Pasternak (1958). In order to avoid cultural isolation, the leaders of the CPSU put in to practice a strategy of strengthening their contacts with European writers. This new strategy was an attempt to keep up appear-

⁶ For a documented discussion of the Sinyavsky-Daniel case, see Ginzburg 1967. The book was published in Russian by the German publisher Posev and circulated in the USSR in *samizdat*.

⁷ For a comprehensive discussion of the political and cultural dynamics during the Thaw in reference to the evolution of Soviet literary criticism, see Dobrenko, Kalinin 2011.

⁸ Khrushchev's speech was supposed to be secret, but the Israeli intelligence officers obtained a copy of the document and sent it to the Eisenhower administration. Allen Dulles, U.S. CIA chief, suggested to leak the speech to the press and, with the agreement of Eisenhower, it was sent to the *New York Times* which published it on 5 June 1956. See "Khrushchev and the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party, 1956". *Office of the Historian, Foreign Service Institute. United States Department of State* (<https://history.state.gov/milestones/1953-1960/khrushchev-20th-congress>, 2019-03-27).

ances, at least in the international literary community, of that new liberal period which was officially inaugurated by the XX Congress.⁹ In 1958 a decree of the CC Ideological Commission emphasized directly the importance of cultural exchanges with the West, underlining that “in recent years the number of publications of foreign literary works that contribute to the development of our cultural ties with foreign countries has significantly increased, which is essential for the intellectual life of the Soviet people” (Postanovlenie Komissii TsK KPSS 2000b, 45).

In an attempt to contextualize the reception of Italian literature in the USSR within this political and cultural framework, one detail is worth noticing: the need to maintain contacts with the Italian *intelligentsiya* in the late fifties and sixties saw, during its practical implementation, a strong opposition to the Soviet power on the part of the prominent representatives of Italian culture, especially those who previously had always been close to pro-Soviet or, at least, to so-called ‘progressive’ positions. The first major wave of dissents among the Italian communists arose in June 1956, when the press spread the text of Khrushchev’s secret report. The situation deteriorated with the international crisis that followed the riots in Poznan (June 28, 1956) and Budapest (23 October-11 November, 1956), where the armed intervention of the Soviet military forces spoiled the reputation of the USSR among the ranks of the Communist Party of Italy (CPI). On those occasions, there were numerous acts of protest promoted by intellectuals close to the CPI, such as the resounding *Manifesto of the 101*,¹⁰ the *Appeal to the Communists* drawn up by the Communist cell of the publishing house Einaudi ‘Giaime Pintor’,¹¹ and Carlo Levi’s open letter to the Union of Soviet Writers.¹²

⁹ On the cultural policy of the CPSU and on the Soviet-Italian relationships during the Khrushchev era, see Reccia 2012-13.

¹⁰ The *Manifesto* was promoted by a few professors from the University of Rome in collaboration with the communist cell of the publishing house Einaudi (Rome’s office) and was signed by numerous personalities of Italian culture, including literary critics N. Sapegno and A. Asor Rosa, historians R. De Felice and P. Spriano, the deputy of the CPI A. Giolitti and the movie director E. Petri. The document accused the CPI’s direction of serious delays in the condemnation of the Stalinism and harshly criticized the official position of the party regarding the Hungarian uprisings, which were defined as ‘counter-revolutionaries’. The document provoked the indignation of the party leadership. In this regard, see the letter sent by P. Togliatti to Carlo Muscetta, one of the promoters of the initiative and director of the magazine *Società* (Togliatti 2014a). For further details, see also Carnevali 2006.

¹¹ The appeal was written by I. Calvino and then unanimously approved by the other members of the communist cell of the publishing house Einaudi ‘Giaime Pintor’, which included G. Bollati, A. Giolitti, C. Muscetta, U. Scassellati, P. Boringhieri and others. For a detailed discussion, see Carteny 2007; Baldini 2012.

¹² On 15 December 1956, the open letter that C. Levi had published on different Italian newspapers between December 7 and 8 (*l’Unità*, *Avanti* and *Il Punto*) arrived to the

Several intellectuals and writers in those days harshly criticized the CPI (C. Cassola, F. Fortini), and many others even left the party (S. Guarnieri, R. Bilenchi, I. Calvino). The second wave of discontent against the Soviet repressive policy took place in the aftermath of the campaign against Boris Pasternak (1958). On that occasion, the writer Ignazio Silone and the critic Nicola Chiaromonte – directors of the cultural magazine *Tempo presente* – stood up in defense of the author of *Doktor Zhivago* and began to publish numerous representatives of the Soviet dissent on the pages of their magazine.¹³ Silone himself was the promoter of an appeal and a petition in favour of Pasternak, published on 11 November 1958 in the *Mondo* magazine. Intellectual dissent against the Union of Soviet Writers went on in the following years: in 1963 two telegrams were sent, one in support of V. Nekrasov and one in support of I. Ehrenburg who had been severely attacked by Khrushchev during the campaign against the magazine *Novyi Mir*, directed by A. Tvardovsky;¹⁴ and in 1966 many Italian intellectuals – among whom A. Moravia, I. Calvino, I. Silone, G. Vigorelli, L. Bigiaretti and D. Fabbri – joined the appeal promoted by the Pen Club in support of A. Sinyavsky and Yu. Daniel'.¹⁵

Therefore, on the one hand, the desire to avoid cultural isolation pushed the Ideological Commission of PCUS to increasingly focus on foreign literature, and to publish in the USSR between 1957 and 1958 more works by foreign writers (Postanovlenie Komissii TsK KPSS 2000a, 33; 2000b, 45). On the other hand, the difficult international situation demanded caution and contributed to increase the levels of attention and suspicions against the foreign writers. This ambiva-

Union of Soviet Writers. The aim of the letter was to criticize the Soviet policy in Hungary. The appeal was signed by many intellectuals and Italian writers, including C. Muscetta, V. Pratolini, C. Cassola, N. Sapegno, L. Visconti, A. Moravia and A.M. Ripellino. The original copy, kept in the Russian State archive (RGALI, f. 631, op. 26, d. 1673, ll. 1-13. *Otkrytoe pis'mo ital'yanskikh pisatelei sovetskimi pisatelyam o vengerskikh sobytiyakh v dek. 1956 g. Na frantsuzskom yazyke s perevodom.*), is written in French and was drafted on headed paper of the publishing house Einaudi. In the Russian translation of the document the following note was added: “C. Levi [...] wrote this letter after an interview with the publisher Giulio Einaudi and the writer Italo Calvino, who supported him”. G. Einaudi and I. Calvino, in fact, do not appear as signatories of the document but the note reported their responsibilities as promoters of the protest action.

13 On the role of the magazine *Tempo presente* in the Italian diffusion of the works of Soviet dissident writers and of Russian émigré literature, see Guagnelli 2012-13.

14 A translation of the telegrams indicating the date of 23 March 1963 is kept at the archive RGALI (f. 631, op. 26, d. 1887, ll. 1-18. *Perepiska s ital'yanskimi pisatelyami ob izdanii v SSSR ikh proizvedenii, obmene knigami, literaturnoi informatsiei i dr. Na ital'yanskom yazyke*): at the bottom of the telegram addressed to Viktor Nekrasov there are the names of G. Einaudi, P.P. Pasolini, I. Calvino, A. Moravia and G. Bassani. The telegram addressed to I. Ehrenburg was signed by the same personalities, except for G. Einaudi.

15 See Mieli, Paolo (2012). “Intellettuai reticenti sul dissenso in URSS. La sinistra italiana ed il processo Sinjavskij-Daniel'”. *Corriere della Sera*, 12 giugno, 34.

lent attitude is largely demonstrated by the numerous reports and reviews (*obzory*) commissioned to the consultants of the Foreign Commission of the Union of Soviet Writers in reference to the political and literary situation in Italy in the crucial two-years period 1956-58. The attention given to the developments of the crisis of the Italian left – and the consequent change in the positions of many intellectuals previously considered ‘friends’ of the USSR – is evidenced by the reports of G. Breitburd *On Revisionism in Literature (O revizionisme v literature)* and *Literary Relations with Italy (Literaturnye svyazi s Italiei)*,¹⁶ which provided a detailed account of the Italian political and cultural situation. Writing about the ‘revisionist’ movement, Breitburd reported of the leave of many intellectuals from the CPI, noting with some irony that the anti-Soviet publications had sprung up “like mushrooms after the rain” (*kak griby posle dozhdya*).¹⁷ Among these publications, he included the magazine *Tempo presente* of the ‘renegade’ I. Silone, who is described as an agent paid by the international intelligence services.¹⁸ Particular attention was paid to the activities of the anti-Soviet critic Paolo Milano who, alongside with the publisher Giangiacomo Feltrinelli, was accused of having been one of the largest organizers of the Pasternak affair, contemptuously called ‘pasternakiad’ (*pasternakiada*).¹⁹ In his report, Breitburd divided the Italian revisionists into two main groups: those who took part in the ideological war (*ideologicheskaya bor’ba*) against the Soviet Union in 1958 and those who abstained from it. In his analysis, it turns out that in those years the real split between ‘friends’ and ‘enemies’ of the USSR was marked not by the Hungarian crisis, but by the campaign against Boris Pasternak. In this light, Italo Calvino – an active opponent of the occupation of Budapest – was counted among the ranks of the intellectuals who did not join the “anti-Soviet campaign organized around the ‘Pasternak’s deal’” (*antisovetskaya*

16 Both documents are kept at the RGALI in the K.L. Zelinsky’s archival fund (RGALI, f. 1604, op. 1, d. 1129, ll. 1-224. G.S. Breitburd, S. Krugerskaya, F. Lur’ė. *Obzory gazet i zhurnalov Velikobritanii, Italii, SSHA, sdelannye dlya inostrannoi komissii, SP SSSR*). It is noteworthy that the documents sent to the Foreign Commission of the Union of Writers should be stored in a personal fund, although Zelinsky had been member of the Union since its foundation (1934). The same surprise was expressed by the historian P. Reifman, who noted that it was a strange coincidence that the manuscripts of *Doctor Zhivago* had been preserved for a long time in the fund of Zelinsky, who was one of the most active participants in the denigration campaign against the same Pasternak (see Reifman w.d.).

17 RGALI, f. 1604, op. 1, d. 1129, l. 41. G.S. Breitburd, S. Krugerskaya, F. Lur’ė. *Obzory gazet i zhurnalov Velikobritanii, Italii, SSHA, sdelannye dlya inostrannoi komissii, SP SSSR*.

18 RGALI, f. 1604, op. 1, d. 1129, l. 42. G.S. Breitburd, S. Krugerskaya, F. Lur’ė. *Obzory gazet i zhurnalov Velikobritanii, Italii, SSHA, sdelannye dlya inostrannoi komissii, SP SSSR*.

19 RGALI, f. 1604, op. 1, d. 1129, l. 42. G.S. Breitburd, S. Krugerskaya, F. Lur’ė. *Obzory gazet i zhurnalov Velikobritanii, Italii, SSHA, sdelannye dlya inostrannoi komissii, SP SSSR*.

kampaniya, razvernutyaya vokrug 'dela Pasternaka').²⁰ On the contrary, Ignazio Silone, who was the promoter of a campaign in support of the writer, was included in the ranks of those who had joined the anti-Soviet struggle.

In the light of the above-mentioned facts, one must place the new Soviet editorial policy of the late fifties in a delicate interplay of forces and interests which – though filtered through the prism of cultural policy – revealed the Soviet attempt to widen the consensus within the European intellectual left circles. The purpose of this strategy was aimed to maintain a dialogue with the West in the difficult climate of the Cold War. It is not surprising that G. Breitburd, reporting in 1957 on the literary relations between the USSR and Italy, with ostentatious optimism highlighted the fact that “despite the attempts to resume the Cold War’s methods in the cultural field emerged in 1956, our literary links with Italy have successfully developed over the last year”.²¹ Indeed, some Italian intellectuals were trying to keep alive the relationships with the USSR. This cultural cooperation was evidenced by the fact that, in 1956, representatives of the Soviet culture were invited to a conference organized by the European Society of Culture which was held in Venice (25-31 March);²² in 1957, a delegation of Soviet poets attended to a meeting in Rome (8-10 October);²³ and, the following year, some Soviet writers were invited by the European Community of Writers to a conference held in Naples.²⁴ The desire to maintain sustainable cultural relations between the two countries can be seen, for example, in the change of attitude of the USSR towards the European Society of Culture: although the latter was initially seen in a bad light, in such an intricate situation the contacts with it were used to strengthen the ties with the European intellectuals who were close to the Society. In this respect it’s worth mentioning that only a few years earlier, when the Society was found-

20 RGALI, f. 1604, op. 1, d. 1129, l. 44. G.S. Breitburd, S. Krugerskaya, F. Lur’ė. *Obzory gazet i zhurnalov Velikobritanii, Italii, SSHA, sdelannye dlya inostrannoi komissii, SP SSSR*.

21 RGALI, f. 631, op. 26, d. 1688, l. 1. *Spravka o literaturnykh svyazyakh mezhdud SSSR i Italiei v 1957 g.*

22 In that occasion, I. Ehrenburg, K. Fedin and B. Polevoi participated at the meeting. See RGALI, f. 1604, op. 1, d. 1129, l. 57, ll. 1-224. G.S. Breitburd, S. Krugerskaya, F. Lur’ė. *Obzory gazet i zhurnalov Velikobritanii, Italii, SSHA, sdelannye dlya inostrannoi komissii, SP SSSR*. For a detailed discussion of the topic, see Jachec 2008, 2015.

23 The meeting between Italian and Soviet poets was organised by the Association Italy-URSS, which invited in Rome the poets A. Tvardovsky, L. Martynov, N. Zabolotsky, M. Bayan, V. Inber, M. Isakovsky, A. Prokof’ev, B. Slutssky, S. Smirnov and the secretary of the Union of Soviet Writer, a poet as well, A. Surkov. In that occasion G. Breitburd was the interpreter and the cultural mediator between the Soviet delegation and the Italian one (see Gravina 1995, 83-5).

24 RGALI, f. 1604, op. 1, d. 1129, l. 57. G.S. Breitburd, S. Krugerskaya, F. Lur’ė. *Obzory gazet i zhurnalov Velikobritanii, Italii, SSHA, sdelannye dlya inostrannoi komissii, SP SSSR*.

ed (1950), the same Palmiro Togliatti expressed his aversion against the adherence of the leaders of the CPI, who had been invited to join it, claiming that the Society was composed “of people without any political worthwhile goal for us” (Togliatti 2014b). On the contrary, the European Community of Writers was founded in 1958 at the proposal of the Italian National Union of Writers just to counteract the action of the Pen Club which had adopted a closed-door policy towards the Soviet Bloc writers.²⁵ To consolidate these exchanges several members of the Italian cultural delegations visited the USSR in the same years: these were mostly intellectuals and writers closer to the CPI,²⁶ and many of them, on their turning back home, published reports and often fictionalized travel memories that helped to reinforce the myth of the land of Soviets in the imagination of the Italian reader.²⁷ Therefore, it is clear that the cultural politics of the CPI and of the CPSU in the late fifties and early sixties were driven by a strong utilitarian component.

3 Reception of Italian Literature during the Thaw: Neorealism vs Anticommunism

In the USSR, during the Thaw, despite the Soviet policy of opening up to foreign literature, the cultural production still remained restricted by ideological boundaries. A decree from 1958 stated that the choice of texts allowed for publication had to be carefully planned by State publishing houses and, subsequently, approved by the higher organs of control.²⁸ In this hierarchical censorial system, the Soviet publishing houses were given the task of monitoring the works of foreign writers in the first instance and of making these works abide to the ideological prescriptions:

²⁵ RGALI, f. 1604, op. 1, d. 1129, l. 57. G.S. Breitburd, S. Krugerskaya, F. Lur’ė. *Obzory gazet i zhurnalov Velikobritanii, Italii, SSHA, sdelannye dlya inostrannoi komissii, SP SSSR*.

²⁶ Italo Calvino visited the USSR in 1951, Carlo Levi in 1955, Alberto Moravia and Curzio Malaparte in 1956, Elsa Morante in 1957.

²⁷ Among these works, see: I. Calvino, *Taccuino di viaggio nell’Unione Sovietica*, 1952; C. Levi, *Il futuro ha un cuore antico: viaggio nell’Unione Sovietica*, 1956; A. Moravia, *Un mese in URSS*, 1958.

²⁸ The most important organs of censorship were the Ideological Commission of the Union of Soviet Writers (*Ideologicheskaya komissiya SP SSSR*), the Commission of the CC CPSU for Questions of Ideology, Culture, and International Party Relations (*Komissiya TsK KPSS po voprosam ideologii, kul’tury i mezhdunarodnym partiinym svyazyam*); the Division of Propaganda and Agitation of the CC CPSU (*Otdel propagandy i agitatsii TsK KPSS*); the Division of Culture of the CC CPSU (*Otdel kul’tury TsK KPSS*) and the General Directorate for the Protection of State Secrets in the Press under the Council of Ministers of the USSR (*Glavnoe upravlenie po okhrane gosudarstvennykh tain v pechati pri SM SSSR*).

Consider that the main tasks of publishing houses of foreign fiction are the publication of books that promote the Communist education of the working people and their familiarization with the works of world literature's classics; the expansion of their cultural horizons; the development of their artistic taste; the publication of works that reflect the most important processes of social development and the growth of progressive democratic forces; and the people's struggle for peace and democracy. Such purposes require a strict and demanding selection of the works based on their ideological and artistic qualities. (Postanovlenie Komissii TsK KPSS 2000b, 46)

The foreign works published in the USSR were supposed to foster the 'ideological growth' (*ideinyi rost*) of the Soviet reader, and the criticism had the duty to "unravel in every respect the values and the ideological and artistic deficiencies of the foreign writers' works published in our country" (Postanovlenie Komissii TsK KPSS 2000b, 46). This understanding of the educational and corrective role of criticism stemmed from the typical Soviet perspective on the meaning of a literary work, which was considered an objective entity, self-existent and independent from external factors such as the interaction with the reader. As noted by E. Dobrenko, Soviet aesthetics of reception rejected the idea that the meaning of the artwork, in part, is created at the moment of its reception and, to a certain extent, in cooperation with the action of the reader-agent. On the contrary, it assumed that the value of a work of art is objective and it does not change in different contexts. The task of Soviet criticism was therefore reduced to suggesting to the reader the 'correct interpretation' (*vernaya interpretatsiya*) of literary works (Dobrenko 1997, 22). Hence, in the USSR, the reception of foreign texts was influenced by two factors: the ideological one, which regulated the selection of texts to be published; and the aesthetical one, which determined the unanimous interpretation of these texts in accordance with the categories and functions valid within the Soviet literary system. Since it was dominated by Socialist Realism, literary and critical *methods* were based on the principles of 'truthfulness', 'historical concreteness' and of the representation of reality in its 'revolutionary development'; but the *purpose* (or the *Purpose* with the capital letter, to put it with Tertz-Sinyavsky; see Sinyavsky 1957) was represented by the ideological education, the progress of the working class and the achievement of socialism.

Thus, during the Thaw the reception of foreign literature was regulated by these aesthetic and ideological postulates. However, thanks to the new cultural strategy, since the end of the fifties there was an increase in foreign publications. In the case of the Italian literature, it started in 1958 and should be considered a direct effect of the intensification of cultural relations between the Soviet Union and Italy, as reported above. A report on the translations from Italian published in the

USSR between 1958 and 1959 - *O publikatsii perevodov proizvedenii ital'yanskoi literatury v 1958-59 gg.*²⁹ - shows that Russian translations of Italian works were actively promoted by some members of the Cultural Commission of the Italian Communist Party. In this document, G. Breitburd - the consultant for the Italian literature at the Foreign Commission of the Union of Soviet Writers - reported that the publication of Italian writers had been discussed with Mario Alicata (who at the time was the head of the CPI's Italian Cultural Commission) and Giancarlo Pajetta (the chief editor of the left-wing journal *l'Unità*). Both were closely interested in the matter, especially because of its great political significance and potential contribution to solving the crisis of the Italian left *intelligentsiya*. The document emphasized the formal deficiencies of the Soviet diffusion of the twentieth-century Italian literature, such as the tendency to privilege works of little significance to the disadvantage of others that deserved more attention. In this regard, Breitburd mentioned the missed publication of such masterpieces as C. Alvaro's *People in Aspromonte* (*Gente in Aspromonte*, 1930), A. Moravia's *Times of Indifference* (*Gli indifferenti*, 1929), E. Vittorini's *Conversation in Sicily* (*Conversazione in Sicilia*, 1938-39), C. Pavese's *The Moon and the Bonfires* (*La luna e i falò*, 1950) and I. Calvino's works. However, Breitburd's judgment was expressed according to the criteria of utility and ideological correctness - as indeed shown in the list of titles and authors proposed, all close to the neorealist school. He argued:

What is much more important is to consider the issues of the translation of the Italian postwar literature. The literature of this country, which in the years of Fascism was strictly provincial and insignificant, in the postwar period has experienced an impressive qualitative leap.³⁰

The special attention reserved to the reader was a further proof that Soviet culture was "a political and aesthetic project *radically focused on the recipient*" (Dobrenko 1997b; Eng. trans., 2):

For the Soviet reader, postwar Italian literature is of a particular interest due to the specific feature of its development, which had determined the broader democratic, anti-fascist and anti-bourgeois character of this literature.³¹

²⁹ RGALI, f. 631, op. 26, d. 1763, ll. 1-4. *Spravka ob izdanii v SSSR proizvedenii ital'yanskikh pisatelei v 1958-1959 gg.*

³⁰ RGALI, f. 631, op. 26, d. 1763, l. 1. *Spravka ob izdanii v SSSR proizvedenii ital'yanskikh pisatelei v 1958-1959 gg.*

³¹ RGALI, f. 631, op. 26, d. 1763, l. 2. *Spravka ob izdanii v SSSR proizvedenii ital'yanskikh pisatelei v 1958-1959 gg.*

the Soviet reader could hardly object to the acquaintance with these works.³²

Despite the increase of the Italian titles published during the Thaw, the new Soviet editorial policy continued to be linked to a series of ideological and strategic reasons – both in terms of internal and foreign policy. This contingency, of course, contributed to giving the Soviet reader a cleaned up and somehow misleading perspective on the vast Italian postwar literary scene, reduced to the lowest terms of militant literature which, since the fifties, was widespread in the land of the Soviets. If one examines the Italian titles published in 1960,³³ for example, one can see that almost all of them are to deal with Neorealism (C. Alvaro,³⁴ C. Bernari,³⁵ A. Moravia³⁶), and especially to the postwar production, which was more politically and socially committed (R. Viganó,³⁷ V. Pratolini,³⁸ C. Montella,³⁹ I. Calvino,⁴⁰ E. Vittorini⁴¹). Instead, in the framework of children's fiction, one can see a clear tendency for the fantastic literature of G. Rodari⁴² and

32 RGALI, f. 631, op. 26, d. 1763, l. 3. *Spravka ob izdanii v SSSR proizvedenii ital'yanskikh pisatelei v 1958-1959 gg.*

33 These data come from the document *Spisok proizvedenii ital'yanskikh pisatelei, izdannyykh v SSSR v 1960 g. i retsenzii na nikh* stored in the archival group of the Union of Soviet Writers at the RGALI (f. 631, op. 26, d. 1822, ll. 1-13. *Spisok proizvedenii ital'yanskikh pisatelei, izdannyykh v SSSR v 1960 g. i retsenzii na nikh.*)

34 K. Al'varo, *Revnost' i drugie rasskazy*, Moskva: Inostrannaya literatura, 1960; "Sluchai iz khroniki", *Literaturnaya Gruzija*, 3, 1960, 32-6; "Poslednii dnevnik", [retsenziya], *Inostrannaya literatura*, 3, 1960, 280.

35 K. Bernari, "Chernaya trava. Dver', kotoraya ne otkryvaetsya", *Inostrannaya literatura*, 1, 1960, 142-7.

36 A. Moravia, "Papari", *Inostrannaya literatura*, 1, 1960, 153-60; "Svatovstvo", *Literatura i zhizn'*, 12 fevralya 1960; "Shimpanze", *Literaturnaya gazeta*, 2 iyunya 1960; "Ni na chto ne godnye", *Izvestiya*, 9 iyuniya 1960; "Radostnyi smekh", *Izvestiya*, 20 avgusta 1960.

37 R. Viganò, "Svadba v partizanskoj brigade", *Inostrannaya literatura*, 1, 1960, 163-71; "Oni iz shkoli v Gorla", *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, 1 iyuniya 1960.

38 V. Pratolini, "Otvornuvshiesya muzhchiny", *Inostrannaya literatura*, 1, 1960, 160-2; "Prodolzhenie 'Metello'", *Inostrannaya literatura*, 7, 1960, 278.

39 K. Montella, *Sluchai v ministerstve*, Moskva: Pravda, 1960; "Chelovek na mine", *Komsomolets Kaspiya*, 4 marta 1960; "Redkaya marka", *Ogonek*, 21, 1960, 11-14.

40 I. Kal'vino, "Glaza vraga", *Inostrannaya literatura*, 1 (1960), 148-53; "Kuritsa v tsekhe", *Ogonok*, 35, 1960, 12-14.

41 E. Vittorini, "Erika", *Inostrannaya literatura*, 9 (1960), 7-44.

42 G. Rodari, *Dzhakomino v strane Izhetsov*, Moskva: Molodaya gvardiya, 1960; *Priklyucheniya Chipollino*, Moskva: Detgiz, 1960; "Schast'e. Novogodnie poiski konechnoi rifmy", *Izvestiya*, 1 yanvariya 1960; "Basta! S etim pora pokonchit'!... O tom, kak u nas brosalii kurit'", *Komsomol'skaya pravda*, 31 yanvarya 1960; "Peshekhod i zebra", *Literatura i zhizn'*, 9 marta 1960; "Literaturnye premii", *Literatura i zhizn'*, 15 maya 1960; "Khudozhnik i tarakany", *Vechernaya Moskva*, 3 sentyabrya 1960; "Skazka dlya bol'shikh", *Izvestiya*, 29 sentyabrya 1960.

M. Argilli,⁴³ who in their stories skillfully combined fantasy and Communist-inspired pedagogy (see Pivato 2015, 104-16). In the field of the literary criticism there are several articles of C. Salinari⁴⁴ and M. Alicata,⁴⁵ some of the most accredited Marxist critics.

Neorealism, a literary movement whose aesthetic and ideological principles were similar to those of *sotsrealizm* – such as the positive hero, the class struggle, the realistic representation of men and women in their historical time, partisan struggle, etc. – was easily assimilated by the Soviet literary system and quite widespread in the USSR. Moreover, thanks to this poetic compatibility, Neorealist aesthetics did not enter into conflict with the ideological education of the Soviet reader, but rather supported the Socialist purpose. However, the massive diffusion of the Italian Neorealism was not only due to ideological cohesion, but also to a programmatic political decision. A 1958 resolution of the Ideological Commission of the CC observed that was not given the due importance to the publication of works by ‘foreign progressive writers’ (*inostrannye progressivnye pisateli*), emphasizing the need to strengthen ties with the progressive forces of other countries (especially the capitalist ones) with obvious strategic and political – even before that literary – purposes:

The publication of contemporary foreign literature which is not sent by the Ministry of Culture of the USSR must be oriented properly to the expansion of our ties with the progressive literary forces in all countries and to the consolidation of forces in the struggle for peace and democracy. (Postanovlenie Komissii TsK KPSS 2000a, 34)

The importance of cooperation with Western intellectuals – especially European – was underlined in a very effective way by the literary critic Tsetsiliya Kin, who in 1961 published in *Voprosy literatury* an article under the eloquent title “The Masters of Culture Reject Anti-Communism” (Kin 1962). In this article the progressive forces of Italian culture were presented to the Soviet reader and identified with the European Community of Writers and the *Europa letteraria* magazine, which had the merit of bringing together the most prominent representatives of the European *intelligentsiya* of the time (A. Robbe-Grillet, R. Caillois, T.S. Eliot, Ju. Kazakov, E. Morante, A. Moravia) and of promoting an active collaboration between progressives and anti-fascist intellectuals. In particular, the magazine, edited by the writer Giancarlo Vigorelli, was intended to encourage “the ex-

⁴³ M. Ardzhilli, G. Parka, *Priklyucheniya Gvozdika*, Leningrad: Detgiz, 1960; *Priklyucheniya K'odino-Vintika*, Moskva: Detskii mir, 1960.

⁴⁴ K. Salinari, “Problemy romana”, *Inostrannaya literatura*, 3, 1960, 214-20.

⁴⁵ M. Alicata, “Za obnovlenie ital'yanskoi kul'tury”, *Inostrannaya literatura*, 5, 1960, 211.

change of ideas and a close cooperation between cultures of the West and the East, or, as Vigorelli used to say, between the Christian and the Marxist Europe” because, “without the dialogue, the exchange of ideas and the constant contact with the representatives of Marxist ideology, the Western European literary tradition cannot exist. Life itself stresses the need of an active relationship between Western writers and those of Socialist countries” (Kin 1962, 123).

The spread of foreign literature since the end of the fifties in the USSR was both a way to maintain contact with the West and avoid cultural isolation. In addition, it provided opportunities for cohesion between the European progressive forces to deal with the ‘anti-communist propaganda’ that was spreading in the West at the end of that difficult decade.

4 *Ital’yanskaya novella XX veka: Microhistory of a Publication*

It was in this new atmosphere of cultural cooperation and political agendas that the anthology *Ital’yanskaya novella XX veka* (*The Italian Novella of the Twentieth Century*, 1969) began to take shape. As stated by the editor Georgi Bogemsky,⁴⁶ the anthology had the dual purpose of “introducing the reader to the work of writers known as the masters of the short story, and who are the most important representatives of the contemporary Italian literature”,⁴⁷ and of “offering a possibly complete and objective picture of the literary and socio-political currents of the Italian prose of this century”.⁴⁸

The planning and publication of the book took a long time and was complicated, not only because of the ambitious nature of the project. The first draft was presented to the director of the publishing house Khudozhestvennaya literatura (S. Emel’yanikov) in 1959, but the work was published only ten years later, in 1969, because of the difficult international political situation and the consequent crisis of the Italian *intelligentsiya*, which rendered the selection of the contents extremely problematic. During the process of editing, the

⁴⁶ Georgi Bogemsky (1920-95) was film critic and translator from Italian. A specialist of neorealist cinema, he was author of numerous monographs devoted to Italian directors such as Federico Fellini (*Federiko Fellini. Stat’i. Interv’yu. Retsenzii. Vospominaniya*, Moskva: Iskusstvo, 1968) and V. De Sica (*Vittorio De Sica*, Moskva: Iskusstvo, 1963). He translated numerous works including several plays by E. De Filippo and short stories by V. Brancati, M. Venturi, P.P. Pasolini, A. Moravia, I. Calvino, D. Buzzati and others.

⁴⁷ RGALI, f. 613, op. 10, d. 4938, l. 81. *Avtorskoe delo: “Ital’yanskaya novella”*. *Sbornik. Perevod s ital’yanskogo L.A. Verzhinina, Ya. Z. Lesyuka, R.I. Kholodovskogo i dr.*

⁴⁸ RGALI, f. 613, op. 10, d. 4938, l. 81. *Avtorskoe delo: “Ital’yanskaya novella”*. *Sbornik. Perevod s ital’yanskogo L.A. Verzhinina, Ya. Z. Lesyuka, R.I. Kholodovskogo i dr.*

political position of the writers who were to be included into the volume was evaluated several times, which complicated significantly the work of the editor. This difficulty was underlined even by the editorial consultants responsible for evaluating the draft written by Bogemsky (R. Khlodovsky,⁴⁹ N. Tomashevsky⁵⁰ and L. Vershinin⁵¹), who considered that the “dubious reputation of some writers” (*neyasnost' nekotorykh pisatel'skikh reputatsii*) was a kind of “specific difficulty of the matter” (*spetsificheskaya trudnost' materiala*).⁵² In 1968, Khlodovsky, expressing his opinion on the final draft of the volume, observed that the changed political orientation of many neorealist writers who were included in the collection required an adjustment in the reception of these authors (especially those already known in the USSR) “if not through a radical revision” (*korennoi peresmotr*), at least through “serious clarifications” (*ser'eznye utochneniya*).⁵³ In the editorial draft – sent on 19 January 1961 to the chief editor Sergei Osherov⁵⁴ – G. Bogemsky proposed “to represent as objectively as possible (*po vozmozhnosti*) the writers of different philosophical and socio-political orientations, in order to depict the three key stages in the history of Italy: the Fascist period, the period of the Resistance

49 Ruf Khlodovsky (1923-2004) was a philologist, literary critic and translator from Italian to Russian of A. Moravia, V. Pratolini, L. Pirandello, D. Buzzati and I. Calvino among others. He was one of the main researchers at the M. Gorky Institute of World Literature and authored critical works on Francesco Petrarca, the Italian Renaissance and Medieval Italian literature.

50 Nikolai Tomashevsky (1924-93) – son of the critic and Slavic philologist Boris Viktorovich Tomashevsky – was a literary critic and translator from Spanish and Italian. Since 1953, he taught at the M. Gorky Institute of World Literature and, from 1963 to 1970, he taught Russian literature in Italy (Rome and Naples). Specialized in Italian Renaissance literature, with a particular predilection for the 16th century, he edited several volumes dedicated to the *Commedia dell'Arte* and the Renaissance novel (*Ital'yanskaya novella Vozrozhdeniya*, Moskva: Khudozhestvennaya literatura, 1984; *Ital'yanskaya komedija Vozrozhdeniya*, Moskva: Khudozhestvennaya literatura, 1999). He also translated N. Machiavelli, L. Pirandello, E. De Filippo and I. Calvino.

51 Lev Vershinin (1926-2013) translated from Italian numerous authors such as D. Buzzati, P. Levi, A. Moravia, G. Rodari and I. Calvino. Since the fifties he worked as a consultant for Italian literature for several Soviet publishing houses.

52 RGALI, f. 613, op. 10, d. 4938, l. 73. *Avtorskoe delo: "Ital'yanskaya novella". Sbornik. Pervod s ital'yanskogo L.A. Vershinina, Ya. Z. Lesyuka, R.I. Kholodovskogo i dr.*

53 RGALI, f. 613, op. 10, d. 4938, l. 14. *Avtorskoe delo: "Ital'yanskaya novella". Sbornik. Pervod s ital'yanskogo L.A. Vershinina, Ya. Z. Lesyuka, R.I. Kholodovskogo i dr.*

54 Sergei Osherov (1931-83) was a philologist specialized in ancient classical languages and a translator from Latin and Greek. He translated Virgil, Seneca, Xenophon, Demosthenes and others, including the Latin works by G. Pascoli. From 1960 to 1971, he was editor at the publishing house Khudozhestvennaya literatura for ancient Greek, Latin, Italian and German literature and editor of the series “Biblioteka antichnoi literatury”. Since 1972, he was a member of the Translators Section of the Union of Soviet Writers.

and the postwar period”.⁵⁵ However, as prophetically underlined by the editor, the chances of publishing an ideologically diversified volume were quite low. Despite the good intentions of introducing the Soviet reader to “the most important representatives and typical of the contemporary Italian literature in general and of its various literary trends”,⁵⁶ the selection of the authors appears very uneven, with a clear predominance of *engagé* writers close to the neorealist movement (E. Vittorini, R. Viganò, G. Bassani, I. Calvino, M. Venturi, S. Micheli, V. Pratolini, C. Cassola, A. Moravia and C. Pavese).

The early drafts of the index also offered quite heterogeneous selection of authors who could not be categorized as progressive and anti-fascist and whose poetics was closer to Magic Realism and Surrealism (I. Svevo, G. Papini, A. Palazzeschi, M. Bontempelli and D. Buzzati). However, no trace of this selection was left in the final edition.⁵⁷ If we compare the published version of the index to its different preliminary versions – compiled by the same Bogemsky in accordance with the instructions and suggestions of the editorial advisors – we notice that numerous editorial interventions contributed to crippling the scant plurality of the anthology, confining the volume within the limits of determined ideological postulates and excluding the literary works published in the Fascist period (1922-43) which were not inspired by the aesthetics of Realism. This change was contrary to the suggestions of the editorial consultants who, already in 1961, had criticized the first draft of the content for excluding some notable authors of the Fascist period. In this regard, the critic and Italianist Ruf Khlodovsky expressed his opinion as follows:

The main shortcoming of the collection of twentieth-century Italian novella lies in its scarce and poor representation of the Italian

⁵⁵ RGALI, f. 613, op. 10, d. 4938, l. 65. *Avtorskoe delo: “Ital’yanskaya novella”*. *Sbornik. Perevod s ital’yanskogo L.A. Vershinina, Ya. Z. Lesyuka, R.I. Kholodovskogo i dr.*

⁵⁶ RGALI, f. 613, op. 10, d. 4938, l. 65. *Avtorskoe delo: “Ital’yanskaya novella”*. *Sbornik. Perevod s ital’yanskogo L.A. Vershinina, Ya. Z. Lesyuka, R.I. Kholodovskogo i dr.*

⁵⁷ In the first draft of the anthology (1959) brought to the attention of the editor S. Emel’yanikov, Bogemsky had also included the writers M. Serao, S. Di Giacomo, L. Capuana, G. D’Annunzio, G. Deledda and L. Pirandello. Their later exclusion from the index was due to practical reasons: the same publishing house was already printing the first volume dedicated to 19th century Italian novels, which also included short story from the early decades of the 20th century (*Ital’yanskije novelly 1860-1914*, Moskva: Khudozhestvennaya literatura, 1960). However, the overall picture on the development of the Italian novella presented in the latter publication also fell within precise ideological limits. Starting from Giovanni Verga, the volume offers a broad perspective on the development of *Verismo*, then focuses on the realist production between the late 19th century and the early 20th century. For example, regarding the literary production of G. D’Annunzio, the anthology proposes some poems of his realist period published in his first collection of short stories (*Terra Vergine*, 1882; *Novelle della Pescara*, 1902), while the literary production of the Fascist period is completely ignored.

short stories of the period from the beginning of the century until 1943, that is until the collapse of the Fascist dictatorship in Italy.⁵⁸

As you examine the composition of the collection *Ital'yanskaya novella XX veka*, what first catches the eye is the almost complete absence of short stories belonging to the Fascist period – by which certainly I do not mean Fascists short stories, but those that clearly show the negative attitude of the best part of the writers of the twenties, thirties and forties against the regime of dictatorship and violence imposed on the country by Mussolini and his acolytes. In the collection, the Fascist period is represented by four short stories by Cesare Pavese. These short stories are wonderful as it regards their artistic value, but they alone cannot illustrate all of the difficulties and tensions of the literary struggle that was conducted in Italy in the ‘black decades’ of Fascism.⁵⁹

Ruf Khlodovsky also noted that the *a priori* exclusion of the literature produced during the Fascist period was a mistake often committed in bad faith and on the wrong assumption that all the works written in those years would reflect the Fascist ideological orientation and that, consequently, they would be artistically irrelevant (for the purposes of the Soviet literary system):

Unlike contemporary Italian literature and the one of the early century, the literature of the Fascist period was not translated at all in our country (with the exception of the novels by Germanetto and Silone, which were written in exile), and it was not properly analysed by our literary criticism. However, it does not mean that Italy in that period did not produce anything significant, or at least anything that could make a part of this volume.⁶⁰

In his analysis, Khlodovsky illustrated the variety of Italian literary movements and writers who opposed their resistance to the Fascist rhetoric and its cultural policy and who rejected the official pseudo-literature (*ofitsial'naya psevdo-literatura*). In this regard the ‘hermeticism’ and formal elegance of the so-called ‘artistic prose’ are presented as two forms of the intellectual opposition exercised by

⁵⁸ RGALI, f. 613, op. 10, d. 4938, l. 57, *Avtorskoe delo: "Ital'yanskaya novella". Sbornik. Perevod s ital'yanskogo L.A. Verшинina, Ya. Z. Lesyuka, R.I. Kholodovskogo i dr.*

⁵⁹ RGALI, f. 613, op. 10, d. 4938, l. 59, *Avtorskoe delo: "Ital'yanskaya novella". Sbornik. Perevod s ital'yanskogo L.A. Verшинina, Ya. Z. Lesyuka, R.I. Kholodovskogo i dr.*

⁶⁰ RGALI, f. 613, op. 10, d. 4938, l. 60, *Avtorskoe delo: "Ital'yanskaya novella". Sbornik. Perevod s ital'yanskogo L.A. Verшинina, Ya. Z. Lesyuka, R.I. Kholodovskogo i dr.*

Italian dissident writers during the Fascist dictatorship.⁶¹ Among those, Khlodovsky named Alvaro, Bilenchi, Moravia and Vittorini.⁶² He also proposed to avoid limiting the selection to works written during the postwar period, and to include in the anthology also a few works written by the same authors during the Fascism: in the case of Alvaro, for example, he recommended the short stories of the collection *People in Aspromonte* (1933), not published in the USSR, rather than those of the collection *75 short stories* (1955), which was already partially known to the soviet reader; and he suggested proceeding in the same way with Moravia.⁶³

Nikolai Tomashevsky's assessment also emphasized the lack of prominent authors of the Fascist period and argued that – given the historical and chronological nature of the volume, which was designed to outline the trends of the Italian novella from 1914 to 1960 – it was inconceivable to exclude authors such as M. Bontempelli, T. Landolfi, C. Malaparte and A. Soffici.⁶⁴ Tomashevsky noted that much space was devoted to authors of a lesser literary value. In his view, this implied that the selection criteria were not based on literary or historical considerations, but on ideological ones:

It is not very clear to me why such undisputed names as Carlo Bernari, Landolfi, Cassola and Malaparte are absent from the collection, whereas writers such as Alberto Tofaneli, R. Viganò, Silvio Micheli and Marcello Venturi occupy a predominant position. They could hardly claim to be representatives of the contemporary Italian novella. By all means their political positions should be respected but should not come in substitution of their artistic value (*Sleduet, vsyacheski uvazhat' ikh politicheskie pozitsii, no ne podmenyat' imi pozitsii v literature*). Many Italian writers and just as many public figures (including many prominent Communists), during their stay in Moscow, have repeatedly pointed out that the propaganda of poor-quality works by Communist writers causes more harm than good. In this regard, I would note that

⁶¹ Another such form of resistance against the cultural flattening and autarchy of the Fascist regime is represented by the fact that many anti-fascist writers devoted themselves to the practice of translation during the Fascist period. In this regard, we can mention the publication of the famous anthology of American writers edited by E. Vittorini (*Americana*, 1942) and the numerous translations of C. Pavese who, in those years devoted himself almost exclusively to the translation of American literature. On translation and censorship in the Fascist era see Bonsaver 2007; Rundle 2004; Cembali 2006.

⁶² RGALI, f. 613, op. 10, d. 4938, l. 61. *Avtorskoe delo: "Ital'yanskaya novella". Sbornik. Perevod s ital'yanskogo L.A. Verzhinina, Ya. Z. Lesyuka, R.I. Kholodovskogo i dr.*

⁶³ RGALI, f. 613, op. 10, d. 4938, l. 62. *Avtorskoe delo: "Ital'yanskaya novella". Sbornik. Perevod s ital'yanskogo L.A. Verzhinina, Ya. Z. Lesyuka, R.I. Kholodovskogo i dr.*

⁶⁴ RGALI, f. 613, op. 10, d. 4938, ll. 73-74. *Avtorskoe delo: "Ital'yanskaya novella". Sbornik. Perevod s ital'yanskogo L.A. Verzhinina, Ya. Z. Lesyuka, R.I. Kholodovskogo i dr.*

literary criticism (and editing is one of its subtle but still important forms) absolutely must not follow the 'biographical' method (*anketnyi metod*).⁶⁵

Following these observations, Bogemsky intervened in the third draft of the content in order to implement the changes suggested by the reviewers, including Bontempelli, Bernari, Bilenchi and Palumbo. The fourth draft also included Cassola and Pasolini, and extended the chronological boundaries of the anthology by adding a few short stories published under Mussolini and in the fifties and sixties – as, for example, two novellas written by Alvaro in the thirties (*Davil'nitsa vinograda*, *Osennyaya Burya*), two short stories by Italo Calvino published in the fifties (*Sluchai iz zhizni sluzhashchego*, *Sluchai iz zhizni poeta*) and some works written by Moravia in the sixties (*Avtomat*, *Toska*, *Trel'yazh*). Instead, the new selection reduced the space dedicated to writers such as Viganò, Micheli and Venturi. However, many of these changes left no trace in the final printed version, in which neo-realist works continued to prevail and the different historical and literary movements were represented unevenly. The definitive composition of the anthology went beyond the chronological limits defined by the original title (*Ital'yanskaya novella 1914-1960*), which, consequently, was finally replaced with the more generic *Ital'yanskaya novella XX veka*. The discrepancy between the contents of the last draft and the actual composition of the printed volume clearly shows that – despite the adjustments and arrangements made by editors, critics and authors in order to adapt their editorial projects to the literary and cultural Soviet system – the ultimate decision was to be made by the higher organs of censorship, which could invalidate, disrupt or even reject an editorial work that, as in this case, could have lasted for years.

The documents stored in the publishing house's archive are not complete,⁶⁶ and we are not able to reconstruct what happened from 23 December 1963 (the date of the last draft approved by the director of the editorial board of foreign literature's section A. Mironova, the editor in chief S. Osherov and the director of the publishing house S. Emel'yanikov) to 9 July 1968 (the date of the conclusive notes written by S. Osherov). However, if we compare the last approved index's draft (1963) to the content of the published book (1969), it is clear that the changes realized were aimed at offering the Soviet reader

⁶⁵ RGALI, f. 613, op. 10, d. 4938, l. 74. *Avtorskoe delo: "Ital'yanskaya novella". Sbornik. Perevod s ital'yanskogo L.A. Vershinina, Ya. Z. Lesyuka, R.I. Kholodovskogo i dr.*

⁶⁶ The double numbering of the sheets implies that the material has been archived twice, but the non-correspondence of the number of sheets and the absence of a progressive numbering suggests that numerous pages are missing.

an ideologically oriented perspective on the Italian literature of the first half of the twentieth century, albeit limited only to short stories. This overturning of the editor's and editorial consultants' good intentions and efforts – which were initially aimed at offering to the Soviet reader an overview as complete and objective as possible of the Italian literary process – ended up in turning the volume in yet another anthology mostly dedicated to the so-called literature of the Resistance. In the editorial note (9 July 1968), Osherov presented the work noting that “[l]arge space is reserved for the anti-Fascist theme and for the Resistance” (*bol'shoe mesto v nem zanimaet antifashistskaya tema, tema soprotivleniya*).⁶⁷ It is clear that the anthology which was finally published had an eminent didactic purpose: through criticism (especially through its subtle yet powerful variant that is the editing process) the reader was oriented towards a given interpretation, shaping his/her competence according to the needs of the Soviet system. The cultural adaptation of the Italian literary process to the ideological purposes of the anthology is further confirmed by the editorial note written by Osherov, where he explained that the final version of the book had been reviewed and approved by Mario Alicata,⁶⁸ who at that time was the head of the Cultural Committee of the Italian Communist Party. This fact does not only confirm the active role played by the CPI in the spread of the Italian literature in the USSR. Although Alicata died in 1966 – and, therefore, the draft he approved must have been compiled sometime between the draft of 1963 and that of 1968 – his approval suggests that the interest of the Italian comrades in intensifying cultural relations with the Soviet Union and in disseminating the anti-Fascist writers also exerted a decisive role in the revision of the volume. However, the final content of the anthology underwent further changes after Alicata's approval, as explained by the same Osherov:

[T]he final version has been seen and approved by the late Mario Alicata. Nevertheless, in the final composition additional changes have been made, primarily by updating and, secondarily, by excluding those short stories which in the meantime [i.e., over the years of the editorial work on the volume] had been published elsewhere.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ RGALI, f. 613, op. 10, d. 4938, l. 4. *Avtorskoe delo: "Ital'yanskaya novella". Sbornik. Perevod s ital'yanskogo L.A. Vershinina, Ya. Z. Lesyuka, R.I. Kholodovskogo i dr.*

⁶⁸ RGALI, f. 613, op. 10, d. 4938, l. 5. *Avtorskoe delo: "Ital'yanskaya novella". Sbornik. Perevod s ital'yanskogo L.A. Vershinina, Ya. Z. Lesyuka, R.I. Kholodovskogo i dr.*

⁶⁹ RGALI, f. 613, op. 10, d. 4938, l. 5. *Avtorskoe delo: "Ital'yanskaya novella". Sbornik. Perevod s ital'yanskogo L.A. Vershinina, Ya. Z. Lesyuka, R.I. Kholodovskogo i dr.*

This explanation gives us some additional clarification about editorial interventions on the drafts. However, these changes refer to the selection of single short stories rather than to the selection of the authors, which was made according to the *anketnyi metod* to pursue purely ideological and propagandist reasons. This fact emerges quite clearly if we compare the index draft (1963) to the content of the volume published in 1969, as reported below:

Ital'yanskaya novella XX veka (23 December 1963)	Ital'yanskaya novella XX veka (1969)
Italo Svevo <i>Ubiistvo na ulitse Bel'podzho</i> (<i>L'assassinio di via Belpoggio</i> , 1890)	Italo Svevo <i>Ubiistvo na ulitse Bel'podzho</i> (<i>L'assassinio di via Belpoggio</i> , 1890)
<i>Po-predatel'ski</i> (<i>Proditoriamente</i> , 1923)	<i>Po-predatel'ski</i> (<i>Proditoriamente</i> , 1923)
Massimo Bontempelli <i>Ostrov Iren</i> (<i>L'isola di Irene</i> , 1920)	Massimo Bontempelli <i>Ostrov Iren</i> (<i>L'isola di Irene</i> , 1920)
Giovanni Papini <i>Obmenennye dushi</i> (<i>Le anime barattate</i> , 1912)	Giovanni Papini <i>Obmen dushami</i> (<i>Le anime barattate</i> , 1912)
<i>Ubegayushchee zerkalo</i> (<i>Lo specchio che fugge</i> , 1906)	<i>Ubegayushchee zerkalo</i> (<i>Lo specchio che fugge</i> , 1906)
<i>Nishchii, vyprashivavshii dushi</i> (<i>Il mendicante di anime</i> , 1906)	
<i>Shutka</i> (<i>Uno scherzo</i> , 1914)	
<i>Pervoe donesenie marsian</i> (<i>La prima relazione marziana</i> , 1954)	
Aldo Palazzeschi <i>Den' i noch'</i> (<i>Il giorno e la notte</i> , 1948)	Aldo Palazzeschi <i>Dnem i noch'yu</i> (<i>Il giorno e la notte</i> , 1948)
<i>Dama s veerom</i> (<i>La signora del ventaglio</i> , 1951)	<i>Dama s veerom</i> (<i>La signora del ventaglio</i> , 1951)
<i>Molchanie</i> (<i>Il silenzio</i> , 1951)	
Marino Moretti <i>Potukhshii ochag</i> (<i>L'arola spenta</i> , 1921)	Marino Moretti <i>Potukhshii ochag</i> (<i>L'arola spenta</i> , 1921)
Corrado Alvaro <i>Davil'nitsa vinograda</i> (<i>La pigiatrice d'uva</i> , 1930)	Corrado Alvaro <i>Vzryv</i> (<i>Tempesta</i> , 1940)
<i>Osennaya burya</i> (<i>Temporale d'autunno</i> , 1930)	<i>Nash kvartal</i> (<i>Il nostro quartiere</i> , 1947)
<i>Devochka iz Amal'fi</i> (<i>La bambina di Amalfi</i> , 1950)	<i>Devochka iz Amal'fi</i> (<i>La bambina di Amalfi</i> , 1950)

Ital' yanskaya novella XX veka (23 December 1963)	Ital' yanskaya novella XX veka (1969)
Francesco Iovine <i>Mikele pri Gvadalakhare</i> (Michele a Guadalajara, 1945) <i>Martina na dereve</i> (Martina sull'albero, 1945)	Francesco Iovine <i>Mikele pri Gvadalakhare</i> (Michele a Guadalajara, 1945) <i>Martina na dereve</i> (Martina sull'albero, 1945)
Vitaliano Brancati <i>Starik v sapogakh</i> (Il vecchio con gli stivali, 1945)	Vitaliano Brancati <i>Starik v sapogakh</i> (Il vecchio con gli stivali, 1945)
Dino Buzzati <i>Soldatskaya pesnya</i> (La canzone di guerra, 1949) <i>Rigoletto</i> (Rigoletto, 1954) <i>Shinel'</i> (Il mantello, 1942) <i>Korol v Khorm-el "Khagare"</i> (Il re a Horm el-Hagar, 1949) <i>Zabastovka telefonov</i> (Sciopero dei telefoni, 1958)	Dino Buzzati <i>Soldatskaya pesnya</i> (La canzone di guerra, 1949) <i>Rigoletto</i> (Rigoletto, 1954) <i>Sem' etazhei</i> (Sette piani, 1942)
Carlo Bernari <i>Dushe i serdtse*</i> <i>Vse vopros tona*</i>	Carlo Bernari <i>Smertnyi prigorov</i> (Condanna a morte, 1945) <i>Po tu storonu</i> (Esterina da quella parte, 1947)
–	Giuseppe Marotta <i>Mramor govorit</i> (Il marmo parla, 1964) <i>Dara</i> (Dara, 1962)
Arturo Tofanelli <i>Pokhititel' velosipedov</i> (Il ladro di biciclette, 1957) <i>Pervyi den' voiny</i> (Il primo giorno di guerra, 1957) <i>Tesnye botinki</i> (Scarpe strette, 1957)	Arturo Tofanelli <i>Pokhititel' velosipedov</i> (Il ladro di biciclette, 1957) <i>Pervyi den' voiny</i> (Il primo giorno di guerra, 1957) <i>Tesnye botinki</i> (Scarpe strette, 1957)
–	Elio Vittorini <i>Moya voina</i> (La mia guerra, 1931)
Cesare Pavese <i>Svadebnoe puteshestvie</i> (Viaggio di nozze, 1936) <i>Priyateli</i> (Amici, 1937) <i>Samoubiistvo</i> (Suicidi, 1938) <i>Letnyaya groza</i> (Temporale d'estate, 1937)	Cesare Pavese <i>Svadebnoe puteshestvie</i> (Viaggio di nozze, 1936) <i>Druz'ya</i> (Amici, 1937) <i>Samoubiitsy</i> (Suicidi, 1938)

<i>Ital'yanskaya novella XX veka</i> (23 December 1963)	<i>Ital'yanskaya novella XX veka</i> (1969)
–	Vasco Pratolini <i>Vanda</i> (<i>Vanda</i> , 1947) <i>Moe serdtse</i> (<i>Il mio cuore a Ponte Milvio</i> , 1954)
Giorgio Bassani <i>Noch' 1943 goda</i> (<i>Una notte del '43</i> , 1955)	Giorgio Bassani <i>Noch' 1943 goda</i> (<i>Una notte del '43</i> , 1955)
Carlo Cassola <i>Babà</i> (<i>Babà</i> , 1946)	Carlo Cassola <i>Babà</i> (<i>Babà</i> , 1946)
Alberto Moravia <i>Lovushka</i> (<i>L'imbroglio</i> , 1937) <i>Krokodil</i> (<i>Il coccodrillo</i> , 1956) <i>Vecher vospominanii*</i> <i>Nozhki moei mebeli</i> (<i>Le gambe dei mobili</i> , 1959) <i>Avtomat</i> (<i>L'automa</i> , 1962) <i>Toska</i> (<i>La noia</i> , 1960) <i>Trel'yazh*</i> <i>Zadnii Khod</i> (<i>La marcia indietro</i> , 1959)	–
Italo Calvino <i>Predatel'skoe selenie</i> (<i>Paese infido</i> , 1953) <i>Sluchai iz zhizni sluzhashchego</i> (<i>L'avventura di un impiegato</i> , 1953) <i>Khorosha igra, do korotka pora</i> (<i>Un bel gioco dura poco</i> , 1952) <i>Strakh na tropinke</i> (<i>Paura sul sentiero</i> , 1946) <i>Griby v gorode</i> (<i>Funghi in città</i> , 1952) <i>Luna i N'yak</i> (<i>Luna e Gnac</i> , 1956) <i>Sluchai iz zhizni poeta</i> (<i>L'avventura di un poeta</i> , 1958)	Italo Calvino <i>Predatel'skaya derevnya</i> (<i>Paese infido</i> , 1953) <i>Sluchai so sluzhashchim</i> (<i>L'avventura di un impiegato</i> , 1953) <i>Markoval'do v magazine</i> (<i>Marcovaldo al supermercato</i> , 1963) <i>Presledovanie</i> (<i>L'inseguimento</i> , 1967)
–	Beppe Fenoglio <i>Khozyain platit plocho</i> (<i>Il padrone paga male</i> , 1959)
Romano Bilenchi <i>Zasukha</i> (<i>La siccità</i> , 1944)	–

<i>Ital'yanskaya novella XX veka</i> (23 December 1963)	<i>Ital'yanskaya novella XX veka</i> (1969)
Renata Viganò <i>Prababka Katerina</i> (<i>La bisnonna</i> , 1949) <i>Po mestu zhitel'stva*</i>	–
Silvio Micheli <i>Lombard*</i> <i>Shag vpered*</i>	–
Marcello Venturi <i>Oruzhie – v more*</i> <i>Balilla</i> (<i>Il balilla</i> , 1960) <i>Prazdnik vo vremya manevrov</i> (<i>Festa alle manovre</i> , 1950)	Marcello Venturi <i>Leto, kotoroe my nekogda ne zabudem</i> (<i>Estate che mai dimenticheremo</i> , 1945) <i>Velikaya pesn**</i> <i>Prazdnik vo vremya manevrov</i> (<i>Festa alle manovre</i> , 1950)
Carlo Montella <i>Kto uezhaet na zare</i> (<i>Chi parte all'alba</i> , 1957) <i>Voskresnaya progulka</i> (<i>Gita domenicale</i> , 1957)	Carlo Montella <i>Kto uezhaet na zare</i> (<i>Chi parte all'alba</i> , 1957) <i>Voskresnaya progulka</i> (<i>Gita domenicale</i> , 1957)
–	Nino Palumbo <i>Kamen' vmesto serdtsa</i> (<i>La pietra al posto del cuore</i> , 1964)
–	Pier Paolo Pasolini <i>Drandulet</i> (<i>La bibita</i> , 1950) <i>Snatury</i> (<i>Dal vero</i> , 1953-54)

* Because of the scarcity information in our possession, it was not possible to establish the Italian original title of these novellas.

In light of these data, and if we place the new Soviet editorial policy in the wider framework of the profound upheavals that struck the country in those years – the coming to power of L. Brezhnev (1964), the Sinyavsky-Daniel' trial (1966), the new European crisis following the Prague Spring (1968) and the end of the Thaw (1970) – this reversal of the publishing trend may be considered as symptomatic of the Soviet cultural re-closure, which pushed up the emergence and the further consolidation of the intellectual dissent.

5 The Mass Reader as the Target of the Ideological Critical Discourse

So far, we showed how the changes made in the composition of the anthology were aimed to provide the Soviet reader with a misleading perspective on the Italian literary process, giving preference to 'progressive' writers in order to match the volume contents with so-

cialist propaganda. However, to fully understand the editorial strategies aimed at the creation of the Soviet reader, we must not underestimate the interventions made on the introductory essay which was considered a key tool for effectively proposing the 'correct' interpretation of foreign literary works. The introduction of the anthology *Ital'yanskaya novella XX veka* was entrusted to the critic Tsetsiliya Kin who, in an attempt to historically contextualize the anthology and to create a continuity with the first volume dedicated to the Italian novella (*Ital'yanskije novelly 1860-1914*, Moskva: Khudozhestvennaya literatura, 1960), ideally reconnected the Risorgimento to the Resistance and then offered a detailed picture of the literary development of the Fascist period and after the Second World War. The archive of the publishing house Khudozhestvennaya literatura did not preserve the original copy of this essay, but only the comments that the editor Osherov sent to Kin on 20 May 1968. Nevertheless, this document is very important to reconstruct the micro-history of the editorial process, as it illustrates how the changes suggested to the critic were mainly intended to adapt her essay to the purposes of the collection (*bol'she sorientirovav eë na sbornik*).⁷⁰ The editor - while praising Ts. Kin for the impeccable style of her essay, which offered an interesting picture of the Italian literary process - states categorically that "it is absolutely necessary to make it closer to the structure and to the contents of the anthology" (*stat'yu neobkhodimo bol'she priblizit' k strukture i sodержaniyu sbornika*).⁷¹ In this regard, Osherov gives advice not to mention Brancati and Bernari in reference to the Fascist period, because the book included only their neorealist works (*v svyazi s periodom fashizma nuzhno govorit' ne o Brankati ili Bernari, kotorye voshli v sbornik svoimi neorealistskimi poslevoennymi proizvedeniyami*).⁷²

The omission of this aspect of their literary work and political past was necessary to rebuild their reputation in accordance with the ideological demand of the Soviet system. Hence, this ideological interference seriously affected the reader's reception, offering a cleaned up and somehow misleading perspective on the Italian literary history. Numerous cuts of other nature were also suggested. The editor-in-chief proposed to reduce the space devoted to Vittorini (who had only a single short story published in the volume) in order to mention other neorealist writers, taking the cue from his novel *Conversation*

70 RGALI, f. 613, op. 10, d. 4938, l. 9. *Avtorskoe delo: "Ital'yanskaya novella". Sbornik. Perevod s ital'yanskogo L.A. Verzhinina, Ya. Z. Lesyuka, R.I. Kholodovskogo i dr.*

71 RGALI, f. 613, op. 10, d. 4938, l. 7. *Avtorskoe delo: "Ital'yanskaya novella". Sbornik. Perevod s ital'yanskogo L.A. Verzhinina, Ya. Z. Lesyuka, R.I. Kholodovskogo i dr.*

72 RGALI, f. 613, op. 10, d. 4938, l. 7. *Avtorskoe delo: "Ital'yanskaya novella". Sbornik. Perevod s ital'yanskogo L.A. Verzhinina, Ya. Z. Lesyuka, R.I. Kholodovskogo i dr.*

in Sicily for moving the discussion to “committed literature” (*Mne kazhetsya, chto, rasskazav o ‘Sitsiliiskikh besedakh’, imenno zdes’ i sleduet nachat’ razgovor ob ‘impenio’, poskol’ku obshchepriznano, chto imenno s etogo proizvedeniya nachalas’ ital’yanskaya literatura ‘impen’yata’*).⁷³ Osherov also suggested to deserve more attention to Calvino in order to illustrate the Italian literary transition from Neorealism to the new artistic trends of the sixties (*nuzhno podrobnee pogovorit o Kal’vino, poskol’ku imenno na primere ego tvorchestva luchshe vsego pokazat’ perekhod ot neorealizma k problemam segodnyashnego dnya i novym tvorcheskim printsipam*).⁷⁴ Nevertheless, even this description must be put into precise ideological boundaries, as evidenced by the request to delete from the essay the paragraph dedicated to the New Vanguard, with a particular reference to Gruppo 63⁷⁵ (*razdel o ‘neoavangardistakh’ kazhetsya mne sovershenno lishnim. O nikh dostatochno tol’ko upomyanut’*).⁷⁶

This analysis clearly illustrates the change in editorial dynamics at a crucial point in the USSR history, highlighting the role of Soviet criticism understood as “an institution for cultural adaptation of personality to the machinery of the suprapersonal authority” (Dobrenko 1997b; Eng. transl., 7). In this sense, then, the Soviet *literator* was also a tool of the propaganda, who served as a medium between the Party’s ideology and the mass of readers, and whose purpose was to filter foreign works or to adapt them to the Soviet literary system (Dobrenko 1999). In this perspective, the different editorial phases and in particular the paratextual apparatus that accompanied the Soviet editions of foreign works are a valuable source of information to shed light on the shaping of the Soviet mass reader. Such publications as *Ital’yanskaja novella XX veka* – whose target was the mass reader (*kniga rasschitana na massogo chitatelya*)⁷⁷ – were aimed at the ideological education (*ideinoe vospitanie*) and at the cultural growth (*kul’turnyi rost*) of the Soviet reader. The practical implementation of these purposes was entrusted to the care of the state publishing

73 RGALI, f. 613, op. 10, d. 4938, l. 8. *Avtorskoe delo: “Ital’yanskaya novella”. Sbornik. Perevod s ital’yanskogo L.A. Vershinina, Ya. Z. Lesyuka, R.I. Kholodovskogo i dr.* Here in the text, Osherov used the transliterated Italian words ‘impegno’ [*impenio*] and ‘impegnata’ [*impen’yata*], respectively used for ‘commitment’ and ‘committed’.

74 RGALI, f. 613, op. 10, d. 4938, l. 8. *Avtorskoe delo: “Ital’yanskaya novella”. Sbornik. Perevod s ital’yanskogo L.A. Vershinina, Ya. Z. Lesyuka, R.I. Kholodovskogo i dr.*

75 Gruppo 63 (Group 63) was an avant-garde Italian literary group of the sixties. The group was organized in 1963 in Palermo and among its founders were Umberto Eco, Giorgio Manganelli and Edoardo Sanguineti.

76 RGALI, f. 613, op. 10, d. 4938, l. 9. *Avtorskoe delo: “Ital’yanskaya novella”. Sbornik. Perevod s ital’yanskogo L.A. Vershinina, Ya. Z. Lesyuka, R.I. Kholodovskogo i dr.*

77 RGALI, f. 613, op. 10, d. 4938, l. 4. *Avtorskoe delo: “Ital’yanskaya novella”. Sbornik. Perevod s ital’yanskogo L.A. Vershinina, Ya. Z. Lesyuka, R.I. Kholodovskogo i dr.*

houses' editors and to the literary critics who, as we have seen, applied in the first instance the prescriptive impositions of censorship.

In conclusion, the editors and critics can be regarded as performing a cultural adjustment that corresponds to a real semantic translation due to the crossing of "the boundary [existing] between a translation and the recipient culture" (Torop 2000, 599). In this case, the crossing of semiotic boundaries (*semioticheskie granitsy*) (Lotman 1992) of the Soviet semiosphere produces a number of transformations on the source text (prototext), not only on the level of the text itself, but also on that of the meta-text (paratext). The cultural adaptation performed by paratexts (introductory essays, reviews, prefaces, afterwords) is an example of meta-textual translation (*metatekstual'nyi perevod*) of the wider process which Torop defines "total translation" (*total'nyi perevod*), as to say a translation that involves not only a linguistic transfer, but also a cultural and ideological transfer of the prototext from one semiotic system to another, with the aim of shaping the reader's knowledge and, consequently, his/her repertoire (Kristeva 1986) according to the cultural and ideological requirements of the Soviet system.

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