

UDC 81'5:811.131

**EMBLEMATIC JOURNEYS:  
 GIANNI RODARI'S TRANSLATIONS IN THE USSR**  
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**G. De Florio. Emblematic journeys: Gianni Rodari in the USSR.** The article focuses on the success of the works of the Italian children's writer Gianni Rodari in the Soviet Union. One of the reasons for Gianni Rodari's success in his native Italy lies in his previous popularity in the Soviet Union, thanks to early translations of his works by Samuil Marshak and his numerous visits to the USSR beginning in the 1950s. A committed communist, Rodari wanted to get a better understanding of the country that he admired so much. However, his political attitude was not narrow-minded; he investigated the Soviet education system and style of upbringing and communicated with his readers – Soviet children. In *Cipollino*, the author created a universally acknowledged ideal of a good and honorable hero who fights for freedom, plays in earnest, laughs at difficulties and strives to grow up into a responsible citizen. There are two main factors that contributed to the success of Rodari's works with Soviet readers: first, their material contains an in-depth interpretation of the concept of *utopia*. Rodari understood *utopia* not as an abstraction but as a real responsibility of humanity for its better future. Second, in his creative work, the author pays great attention to folk art, which is a theme running through his rhymes, fairy tales, and stories. Folk tradition was a fundamental element both in Italian children's literature and the Soviet children's literature promoted by Marshak and other prominent writers for children in the first half of 20<sup>th</sup> century. These two vectors are perfectly combined in *Cipollino*, a favourite character with Soviet children, whose adventures are still being translated and staged in theatres outside Italy. The interaction of these vectors explains why the Italian writer is still widely read and loved, his poems are included in school syllabi, and his words are acquiring a new meaning in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The article also reveals the reasons for the lasting popularity of Gianni Rodari's translated works in intersemiotic cultural space of film and cartoons, ballet etc in Russia, Ukraine and other post-Soviet states.

**Keywords:** children's literature, *Cipollino*, Folk art, Gianni Rodari, Italian-Russian translation, *utopia*.

**Дж. Де Флоріо. Емблематичні подорожі: Джанні Родарі в СРСР.** Стаття присвячена аналізу успіху творів італійського дитячого письменника Джанні Родарі в Радянському Союзі. Популярності Родарі на своїй батьківщині, в Італії, сприяв його успіх в Радянському Союзі, де його перекладом займався Самуїл Маршак, і куди він часто їздив сам, починаючи з 50-х років. Дж. Родарі намагався зрозуміти ту країну, яку він, будучи переконаним комуністом, любив і поважав. Незважаючи на це, його позиція не була суто політична; навпаки, він вивчав радянську педагогіку і систему освіти, спілкувався безпосередньо зі своїми читачами – радянськими дітьми. У *Чіполліно* автор створив загальноновизнаний ідеал добродесного героя, який бореться за свободу, веде чесну гру, сміється над труднощами і прагне вирости відповідальним громадянином. Успіх робіт Джанні Родарі в Радянському Союзі зумовлений двома головними чинниками: по-перше, їх матеріал містить глибоку інтерпретацію поняття *утопія*. На думку автора, *утопія* не просто абстракція, вона являє собою реальну відповідальність усього людства за створення кращого майбутнього. По-друге, в своїй творчості автор приділяє велику увагу фольклорному складнику, який можна знайти як в його віршах, так і в казках і оповіданнях. Народний елемент відіграв найважливішу роль як в італійській, так і в радянській дитячій літературі, яку Маршак разом з іншими видатними дитячими письменниками створювали протягом першої половини ХХ століття. Ці дві лінії переплітаються в образі Чіполліно, який став одним з найулюбленіших персонажів радянських дітей, і чий пригоди

досі активно перекладаються і ставляться в театрах за межами Італії. Взаємодія цих векторів пояснює, чому італійського письменника продовжують повсюдно читати й любити, його вірші включені в шкільні програми, а його слова набувають нового значення в XXI столітті. Стаття також розкриває причини тривалої популярності перекладених творів Джанні Родарі в міжсеміотичному культурному просторі кіно і мультфільмів, балету тощо в Росії, Україні та інших пострадянських країнах.

**Ключові слова:** Джанні Родарі, дитяча література, італійсько-російський переклад, народна творчість, утопія, Чиполліно.

**Дж. Де Флоріо. Емблематические путешествия: Джанни Родари в СССР.** Стаття посвящена аналізу успіха произведений італійського дитячого письменника Джанни Родари в Советском Союзе. Популярності Родари на своїй родині, в Італії, спосібствовал его успех в Советском Союзе, где его переводом занимался Самуил Маршак, и куда он часто ездил сам, начиная с 50-х годов. Дж. Родари пытался понять ту страну, которую он, будучи убеждённым коммунистом, любил и уважал. Несмотря на это, его позиция не была сугубо политическая; наоборот, он изучал советскую педагогику и систему образования, общался напрямую со своими читателями – советскими детьми. В *Чиполлино* автор создал общепризнанный идеал благородного героя, который борется за свободу, ведет честную игру, смеется над трудностями и стремится вырасти ответственным гражданином. Успех работ Джанни Родари в Советском Союзе обусловлен двумя главными факторами: во-первых, их материал содержит глубокую интерпретацию понятия *утопия*. По мнению автора, утопия не просто абстракция, она представляет собой реальную ответственность всего человечества за создание лучшего будущего. Во-вторых, в своем творчестве автор уделяет большое внимание фольклорной составляющей, которую можно найти как в его стихах, так и в сказках и рассказах. Народный элемент играл важнейшую роль в итальянской, как и в советской детской литературе, которую Маршак вместе с другими выдающимися детскими писателями создавали в течение первой половины XX века. Эти две линии переплетаются в образе *Чиполлино*, который стал одним из самых любимых персонажей советских детей, и чьи приключения до сих пор активно переводятся и ставятся в театрах за пределами Италии. Взаимодействие этих векторов объясняет, почему итальянского писателя по-прежнему повсеместно читают и любят, его стихи включены в школьные программы, а его слова приобретают новый смысл в XXI веке. В статье также раскрываются причины непреходящей популярности переведенных произведений Джанни Родари в интересемиотическом культурном пространстве кино и мультфильмов, балета и т. д. в России, Украине и других постсоветских странах.

**Ключевые слова:** детская литература, Джанни Родари, итальяно-русский перевод, народное творчество, утопия, Чиполлино.

## 1. Introduction

Gianni Rodari's success is well-known all over the world, particularly in the USSR. There, he was perceived as one of the greatest writers of world children's literature and as a politically engaged Western intellectual who, in the 1950s, shared the ideals, hopes, and orientations of the Soviet system.<sup>1</sup>

This article aims to investigate the features of Rodari's poetics and their Ukrainian and Russian translations which made his books famous in the Soviet Union. To achieve this aim I will describe Rodari's journeys to the USSR, beginning with the first year of Rodari's career as a journalist and children's writer. After giving an outline of the different Ukrainian and Russian translations of his *Adventures of Cipollino* which contributed to Rodari's astonishing popularity in the Soviet Union, I will put forward some hypotheses as to the reasons for Rodari's success. First of all, ideological engagement allowed Rodari to be translated and appreciated by the general public, thus avoiding the watchful eyes of Soviet censors. Secondly, the folk art that imbues Rodari's works was a prevailing element in the tradition of Russian children's literature, particularly in Chukovsky's and Marshak's works. Finally, in this paper I will focus on the contemporary popularity of *Cipollino* and other emblematic characters created by Gianni Rodari, which are still used today to convey different messages by adapting to the new post-Soviet historical and social context.

## 2. Gianni Rodari in the 1950s: to the Soviet Union and Back

A letter by the journalist Giuseppe Boffa on the 12<sup>th</sup> March 1956 clearly shows Rodari's importance in the Soviet Union: "Dear Rodari, I have never written to you from Moscow before, for which I now apologise. Nor does this letter, as you shall see, represent any kind of victory over my laziness, being more dictated by events and your celebrity on Soviet soil. As you are perfectly well aware, you are <...> after Togliatti, the most famous Italian in the Soviet Union: your works are translated, reprinted, broadcast, staged in the theatre, read and loved by adults and children alike."<sup>2</sup> At that time Boffa was living in Moscow, where he worked as USSR correspondent for the Italian newspaper *Unità*, and he was well acquainted with both the political and cultural elites of the Soviet capital.<sup>3</sup>

The main features of Rodari's poetics were forged in the 1950s. The key factors in shaping Rodari as a children's writer were his employment as a journalist for various magazines and newspapers and his adherence to communist ideology. These factors enabled him, among other things, to gain a closer familiarity with Soviet life. From 1950 to 1953, Rodari was director of the Italian magazine *Il Pioniere* ("The Pioneer"). He would continue his collaboration with this publication, in which he had his own column entitled "*Gianni Rodari's Corner*", until 1962. In 1953, he was invited to lead *Avanguardia* ("Vanguard"), the weekly of the FGCI (Italian Communist Youth Federation). At the Milanese and Roman offices of the *Unità*, he was a regular contributor to the column "Letters of Whys" (from the 25<sup>th</sup> May 1957 to 5<sup>th</sup> June 1958) and "*The Book of Whys*" (from 18<sup>th</sup> August to 10<sup>th</sup> January 1957). This frenzied activity in various journals was largely to determine the creative vein of Rodari as a children's writer. In *Il Pioniere*, aimed exclusively at children, he tried his hand at various genres and styles, improving his clarity of expression and strengthening his skills at long-distance communication with children. In that period, Rodari developed his first theoretical musings on children's literature, triggered by his taking a particular interest in the image of Pinocchio.<sup>4</sup>

From the 1950s, Rodari's experience of visits to the USSR gave an edge to his creative activity as a writer. It is no easy task to accurately reconstruct all of Rodari's trips to the Soviet Union, as there are many discrepancies in the memoirs and documents in which they crop up. Referring to the archival materials, as well as to Soviet press articles, one can conclude the following: Rodari first came to the USSR in 1951 as member of an Italian delegation. At that time, it was very common for Italian intellectuals to be invited to the Soviet Union. The political alliance between the two countries was reinforced through the journeys of writers, journalists and communist activists, who were asked to witness the major achievements of the Soviet Union and to promote Communist ideology on their return home. For this reason such visits were often carefully organized in order to present the best "face" of the country, and today it is essential to critically read the memoirs and reports left by Alcide Cervi, Sibilla Aleramo, Giuseppe Boffa, Alberto Moravia and many others who shed some light on the intricate dynamics that were taking place at that time [Kostantinova 1986; Levi 1986; Krupenina 2014].

On his first visit, Rodari spent time in Moscow, Leningrad, and Central Asia: "Back then, in 1951, no one ever suspected he was a children's poet. It was only when he was leaving that he handed out copies of his books" [Glotser 1957: 43]. Each subsequent visit became an important event.<sup>5</sup> Across the country, children, teachers, and cultural figures greeted Rodari as a major writer, holding festive and heartfelt receptions in his honour. The fame of Rodari in the Soviet Union was undoubtedly stimulated by Samuil Marshak producing some of his finest translations. The famous Russian children's poet, lyricist and translator first set about translating Rodari's poems in 1952. He would later refer to this in a brief note "Why I translated the poems of Gianni Rodari" [Marshak 1971: 332–333], which firstly appeared in the *Literaturnaja gazeta* (№ 141, 22 November 1952). They most likely became personally acquainted in 1963<sup>6</sup> when the Italian writer was making his way back from a tour of the Soviet Union.<sup>7</sup> The journalist Elvira Apone is therefore not exaggerating when she states that "entire delegations of Italian politicians and intellectuals first heard about a certain Gianni Rodari when they came to the

USSR, of whom, as paradoxical as it may sound, not one of them knew anything until the moment when an article by Ruggero Greco appeared on the third page of the newspaper *Unità*, with the title ‘Cipollino in the Land of the Soviets’. From that period on, Gianni Rodari began to be read in Italy too.” (Apone, 2016).<sup>8</sup> Indeed, before this “reflected success”, Rodari had written outside the scope of official criticism in Italy, his books being published by the Italian Communist Party’s (PCd’I) own publisher, Edizioni di cultura sociale (Publications of Social Culture), and circulated only among a narrow circle of left-wing readers. As Marcello Argilli correctly notes, “his work is intertwined with the development of the relationship between the PCd’I and youth associations, schools, and, generally speaking, the policies on children’s issues followed by the Party. We all too often forget that the ‘phenomenon’ of Rodari is the product and producer of the educational initiative of the leftist front, particularly of the PCd’I.” [Argilli 1990: 139].

Even though Rodari’s commitment to Communist ideology was not monolithic and underwent different stages, he was well aware of the important role played by the Soviet Union in the success he achieved in Italy. While travelling across the country, he used to keep a sort of diary in which he wrote down his impressions from the various schools, libraries and venues of the USSR. Such memories were partially published by Einaudi in the book *Giochi dell’URSS* (“Games in the USSR”) after his premature death. The volume preserves the spontaneous style of this kind of recollection; Rodari did not manage to organize his working material to produce the book he had intended, which was to have included aspects of his knowledge of the Soviet education system, ranging from pedagogy to psychology, from psycholinguistics to literature, trying to avoid as far as possible the official rhetoric he had had to endure during his visits: “The diary of the journey to the USSR in 1979 is what is left of the book that Gianni Rodari planned to write about Russian children and childhood. The work never got any further than the pages of the diary, where one can observe the process of collecting material, together with personal remarks and general impressions on Russian life or early thoughts and ideas about how to organize the book. The first problem Rodari had to deal with lay in the impossibility of separating the main topic – the children – from the references to a society ‘that educates them but psychologically influences them’. All the more so as the image of the society offered to Rodari awoke in the writer some doubts about its authenticity. Therefore, his main concern was to skirt around the obligations inherent in an official and strictly organized visit in order to find, during his meetings with children, some sort of ‘natural way’. He meticulously recorded any data which could explain how schools and youth organizations worked; but Rodari’s interest was particularly piqued by the free, only apparently casual, conversation with the children, when he comes to know their experiences. What excites and moves the writer is the discovery of a basic affinity between Western and Eastern children, based not only on their obvious common logical-discursive skills, but also on their imaginative abilities, in the shapes of their imaginary and in their personal and mutual relationships” [Rodari 1984: V].

### **3. The Adventures of *Cipollino*. Translations and Reasons for its Success**

What was it that led to Rodari’s works being such an incredible success “in the land of the Soviets”? As already noted, Marshak’s translations accurately and expressively conveyed the semantic and phonetic load of Rodari’s poems. Following in the wake of these “nursery rhymes”,<sup>9</sup> success was also enjoyed by his book about the adventures of Cipollino,<sup>10</sup> published in the Soviet Union in 1953 in a translation by Zlata Potapova and edited by Samuil Marshak. From a letter written to Gianni Rodari by the editor-in-chief of the Russian *Pioner*, Natalia Vladimirovna Ilyina, we learn that “We were immensely pleased to publish your story about the onion boy. The readers are very fond of your hero and followed his fate with much emotion. Whenever there was even a slight delay in the issuing of the latest issue of the magazine, the kids wouldn’t stop calling the editorial office and inundating us with letters demanding the next installment of ‘*Cipollino*’. I would be delighted to introduce your new works to the children. Could you send them to our office, perhaps? We are delighted to send you a Russian translation of your story about Cipollino,

and hope that this is only the beginning of your collaboration with *Pioner*. With friendly greetings!”<sup>11</sup> Another translation soon appeared on the market, but this time in Ukrainian: on the 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1956 Rodari received a letter from the director of the Kiev branch of the Sovetsky Pisatel publishing house, A. Dyachenko, who, after thanking the writer, wrote “Cipollino has already become a favourite hero of Soviet children” and stated that a Ukrainian version of the Cipollino novel would soon be published by the Molod’ publishing house.<sup>12</sup>

The enthusiastic reviews, complimentary write-ups and positive assessments of Rodari’s story are innumerable. However, we should not dwell overlong on the journalistic material. To understand such enthusiasm, we must turn to the sources of Rodari’s creativity and find a similarity with the long-established tradition of Russian and Ukrainian children’s literature, which had in essence been founded by Samuil Marshak and several other famous writers and illustrators, beginning in the 1910s. There were two factors that most influenced the work of Rodari and caused it to prompt such gushing enthusiasm from Soviet readers and others, down to the present day.

Firstly we must examine the ideological material that impregnates Rodari’s works, written mainly in the 1950s and 60s. This is the origin of the writer’s social engagement, which consists not so much of belonging to a particular political movement as of the hope of making a genuine contribution to the moral and cultural development of society, to solving the universal questions of peace, internationalism and labour. As Rodari himself admits: “In the process of imagination, which seems merely mechanical, my ideology is embedded in exact form, while permitting certain modifications.” [Rodari 1973: 111]. All of Rodari’s poems, short stories and fairy tales are essentially utopian, but for him “utopia”<sup>13</sup> is a far more concrete concept: it is not some distant fairy land, rather it embodies a real responsibility to humanity and the reality surrounding us which the writer has taken upon himself; utopia is of use in terms of making people think and move forward, and so it is found in every piece of Rodari’s work, especially in the fairy tales: “Fairy tales are the allies of utopia, not of stagnation. We therefore <...> defend them; because we believe in the educational value of the utopia, which constitutes the vital transition from a passive acceptance of the world to an ability to criticize and change it.” [Argilli 1990: 115].

It is not by chance that we make mention of his fairy tales. Rodari pays great attention to folklore and folk art,<sup>14</sup> which is the second key factor in his worldwide popularity, particularly in the Soviet Union: “Rising to the heights of Croce and Rabel, Rodari establishes a very strong connection with the ‘lowly’ – with the popular, grotesque culture that is hostile to the authorities and their value system.” [Boero 2010: 128]. Rodari had imbibed the richest currents of Italian folk culture, and his interest in Calvino’s tales and Collodi’s *Pinocchio* is therefore quite unsurprising. The writer refers to the rhythms, sounds, plots and genres that had developed throughout Italy over the course of many decades. The first to notice this, curiously enough, was Samuil Marshak: “It is gratifying to note that the rhythm of children’s folk song has also imbued children’s poetry in the modern democratic poetry of the West. Such, for example, are the poems of the young Italian poet Gianni (Giovanni) Rodari, which the young readers of his country are well acquainted with. <...> His laconic and effective verse, full of fire and fervour, glorifies honest work, freedom and peace. Serious and significant themes are combined in these poems with a lively and distinctive sense of humour. They come as close as is possible to the perception of a child, to the child’s own voice. In them there is that whimsical playfulness without which poetry intended for children is inconceivable. Almost each and every one of the poems is intricately conceived and full of surprises [...]. In some of my translations I have departed from literal accuracy in the attempt to convey the sheer essence of the fresh and immediate poetry of the Italian author. But it would, I think, be impossible to do otherwise when translating such free and fanciful poems for children, often based on funny rhymes.” [Marshak 1971: 332]. Like any great artist, not only does Rodari go beyond the confines of tradition, but also contributes to its renewal and progress. As Belov notes “because the writer is of the people, he has not only continued the tradition of the Italian satirical tale [of Collodi] in his work, but – and this is key! – he has developed it, directing it and making it more socially

acute, using brilliant skill to tackle serious political and ethical problems. Humour in Rodari has gained a new quality, illuminated in a variety of shades, giving expression to the feelings of those who hope and fight for social justice.” [Begak 1968: 60].

The combination of these two aspects is essential to understand the deepest layers of Rodari’s poetics and it may be clearly seen in the example of Cipollino, who morphed from being a mere character in Rodari’s novels to being a creative image (*obraz*), becoming one of the most beloved childhood heroes of several generations of Soviet children. “Cipollino for them is a real classic: from pre-schoolers to the elderly” Rodari recorded in his notebook during his visits in 1979 to the USSR [Rodari 1984: 29]. The success of Cipollino is quite incredible, and the tale of his adventures so popular that, in 1956, Cipollino became a member of the *Klub Vesolykh Chelovechkov* or “Club of Merry Fellows” in the magazine *Vesyolyye kartinki* (“Funny Pictures”) alongside other such cherished Soviet children’s characters as Neznaika, Buratino and Samodelkin. Struck by the popularity of his hero, Rodari wanted to devote a whole chapter of his book about the Soviet Union to Cipollino [Rodari 1984: 29]. Cipollino, that “Spartacus for children”, has it all: a social basis, a fairy-tale element, and stylistic invention. Each character of the novel has his own manner of speech, and the central motif is that of justice, which can only triumph through struggle against oppressors. The tone is strongly charged with optimism and avoids moralizing. In his central character the two lines – the struggle to achieve utopian justice and peace on Earth, and the deep sensibility and curiosity for any folklore tradition – seem to converge.

The *Story of Cipollino* soon outgrew the bounds of literature. In 1961 it was made into a film at the studio Soyuzmultfilm by the director Boris Dezhkin. After that there came a filmstrip, first a black and white, one-part version, then a later one in colour with two parts, by the animator Migunov at the Diafilm studio (1964), and finally the 1973 film by Tamara Lisitsian<sup>15</sup> involving the participation of Rodari himself and his family [Colombo 2013]. The famous ballet of *Cipollino* by Karen Khachaturian, which premiered on the 8<sup>th</sup> November 1975 at the Shevchenko Opera and Ballet Theatre in Kyiv, also deserves mention (libretto authored by G. Rikhlov). This ballet continues to be staged in Ukraine, the Russian Federation and the former Soviet republics.

#### 4. Conclusion. Rodari and *Cipollino* today

Even the greatest classics sometimes lose luster and relevance as new generations begin to forget them. Yet nothing of the sort is observed in Ukraine or in Russia today as far as Rodari is concerned. The Italian writer is still widely read and loved, his poems are included in school syllabi, his tales and novels are staged in youth theatres and other venues, and his words are acquiring a new meaning and sound, thanks to the translations of Irina Konstantinova, Mikhail Vazel and many others. Since 2000 over 50 works by Gianni Rodari have been published (or re-printed) and in 2009 the publishing house Terra-Kn. Klub published a collection of Rodari’s works in four volumes, which is even more remarkable when we remember that in Italy an academic edition of all Gianni Rodari’s works has yet to see the light of day.

An interesting event took place at the end of December 2013, when the Taganka Actors’ Union staged a play which was based on the novel *Cipollino*, but with one important difference from the original: in director Yekaterina Korolyova’s production, the revolution takes place in the minds of the heroes. The director explained that she had decided to make such a drastic change to the ending due to a fear of political rebellion: “The inhabitants of the vast garden of the Count realize that the most important thing is respect for the individual, regardless of money and position, strength or weakness. I think this should be something especially close to the hearts of children.”<sup>16</sup> The Italian press did not hesitate to attribute the director’s decision to contemporary events in Ukraine and an attempt at self-censorship to satisfy the Kremlin elite.<sup>17</sup> To understand whatever may lie behind such a decision is not the purpose of this article, but it certainly demonstrates that *Cipollino*’s adventures have not ceased to stimulate awareness and make children and adults think about topical issues.

Cipollino, Giovannino Perdigiorno, Gip on TV, and Baron Lamberto are good and honorable heroes who fight for freedom, playing in earnest, laughing at difficulties and striving to grow up into honest, cheerful and responsible inhabitants of the universe. The works of Rodari emerged in a specific historical, political and cultural context, and were impregnated with the atmosphere of Italy in the 1950s, 60s and 70s, thus serving simultaneously as an important source for the history of that era. In order to understand his success in the USSR it is therefore essential to take into account the historical, social and intellectual context in which Rodari lived and worked, his relation to Communist ideology, but also his ability to steer clear of any narrow-minded creeds. His commitment to Eastern ideology was not an idealization of a reality which did not exist, but the critical belief in a society that might have built a better future for all humankind. From both the Western and Eastern sets of thinking Rodari was able to single out the values and concrete proposals that he found most sympathetic to his outlook on life, in an approach that could be defined as both utopian and pragmatic.

That is the reason why Rodari's storytelling, like any true work of art, rises above time and space to become a literary being that lives on today. Further endeavors to investigate the fate of Gianni Rodari's translations are sure to be welcomed as they continue to address the whole world with a defense of the importance of such concepts as friendship, labor and peace.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> A letter from Giuseppe Boffa dated 12<sup>th</sup> March 1956. Private archive of the Rodari family. I thank the author's wife, Maria Teresa, and his daughter, Paola Rodari, for the materials provided.
- <sup>2</sup> Historians have studied the relationships between Giuseppe Boffa and the Soviet Union. In particular, Ettore Cinnella investigated Boffa's approach to the most crucial points of Soviet history regarding relations with Italy and the Italian Communist Party [Krupenina 2014: 229–240; Cinnella 2014].
- <sup>3</sup> Rodari's path to Communism was not a straightforward one: he had first adhered to Fascist ideology, having been a member in his youth of the Italian Youth of the Lictor (Gioventù Italiana del Littorio), then joining the Fascist Party in 1941 due to unemployment and a lack of prospects. "I was a philistine intellectual from the provinces, and had all the shortcomings of this type" [Argilli 1990: 12]. It was only in 1943, after meeting the two prominent antifascists Alessandro Realini and Francesco Furega, that he dramatically changed his position, joining the PCd'I in 1944 and being forced to remain in hiding until the 25<sup>th</sup> April 1945.
- <sup>4</sup> Rodari wrote two articles, an essay and various notes on the subject of Pinocchio [Argilli 1990: 82–83]. In August 1952, Italo Calvino suggested he write a book about Pinocchio, though the project was never realised.
- <sup>5</sup> Three (or four) more took place in the 60s and two in the 70s, namely: December 1963 – January 1964; 9<sup>th</sup> December 1965 – January 1966; June 1967; in 1969 (or in 1971) to Kazan; 10<sup>th</sup> July 1973 – 30<sup>th</sup> July 1973; 29<sup>th</sup> August – 28<sup>th</sup> October 1979. Further examination of other materials in the private archive of the Rodari family would be necessary in order to establish these dates without any doubt.
- <sup>6</sup> As Allakhverdova and Glotser recall, "They met as friends, although for the first time. 'I was in Italy exactly thirty years ago,' said Marshak. 'I heard some great folk songs there...' and he sang a few chords. Rodari nodded happily. 'All my poems come from these songs,' he confirmed. 'I thought as much,' said Marshak. 'When I was in Italy, I asked myself: 'Surely a poet must exist who would continue this line?' Gianni and Marshak then had a long and serious conversation about literature and art." [Allakhverdova et al. 1964: 29].
- <sup>7</sup> The history of Marshak's poetic and real-life connection with Rodari is of some interest: Marshak published his first translations on the front page of the *Literaturnaya gazeta* ["Literary Gazette"] (№ 141, November 1952). Marshak was drawn to several features of Rodari's poetry: the Italian poet is able to describe ordinary events from an unusual point of view. He loves hardworking and ordinary people, the smell of handicrafts, workers and peasants. A counting rhyme often lies at the basis of his poems, giving a special rhythm to his verse. Boris Galanov was the first to pass on Marshak's greetings, when visiting Rodari in Rome. He later brought Rodari's books to the USSR.

- <sup>8</sup> Argilli further notes that “His fame in Italy has mostly been the result of the extraordinary success in the Soviet Union built on the novel of Cipollino and the nursery rhymes, brilliantly translated by the great poet Marshak” [Argilli 1990: 84–85].
- <sup>9</sup> Marshak explains the significance of “filastrocche” in Italian children’s culture very well: “This concept includes both counting rhymes, lullabies and songs, all reflecting a child’s perception of the world.” [Marshak 1969: 645].
- <sup>10</sup> Two pieces appear in the magazine *Vie Nuove* (“New ways”) – *L’orto ortolano* (“The vegetable garden”) and *Il frutteto musicale* (“The musical orchard”) – where for the first time the author depicts vegetables and fruit as sentient beings and includes some of the characters that will also appear in later works. The first complete Cipollino adventure, however, appears in the first issue of the weekly *Pioniere* where it takes the form of a comic strip illustrated by Raoul Verdini with Rodari’s texts in 8-syllable quatrains. In 1952, Edizioni di Cultura Sociale published a fourteen-board story signed by *Giampiccolo*; in 1954 “Albi di Cipollino” were released, while twenty-two boards which had appeared in *Pioniere* between 1952 and 1959 were re-published in 1973 as *Ritornano i personaggi del “Pioniere”*. *Almanacco del “Pioniere”* (“The Return of the characters from ‘Pioneer’”. *Almanac of “The Pioneer”*). *Il romanzo di Cipollino* (“The Tale of Cipollino”) was published in book form by Edizioni di Cultura Sociale: due to its success it has been republished many times, but each publication was preceded by a careful ideological and stylistic revision. The major differences are to be found between the first edition of 1951 and the next one by Editori Riuniti of 1957 [Boero 2009: 42–43].
- <sup>11</sup> Letter dated 25<sup>th</sup> June 1953. Private archive of the Rodari family.
- <sup>12</sup> The book *Prigodi Tsibulino* [“The Adventures of Cipollino”] was published in 1956 in a translation by A. Illichevsky, although A. Klyuchnik states confidently in his article of 1957 that “the only book by Gianni Rodari in the Ukrainian language is *Starim i malim pro Italiyu i Rim*” [Klyuchnik 1957: 24].
- <sup>13</sup> “The main lesson of Rodari is to use utopia as a weapon against adaptation” [Massini 2011: 104].
- <sup>14</sup> Rodari had been interested in folklore, folk traditions and songs since the very beginning of his career [Rodari 1946; Bermani 1990]. Rodari had written several articles on folk songs between 1949 and 1952.
- <sup>15</sup> Tamara Lisitsian knew Italy and Italian politics quite well, since after the Second World War she married Gino (Luigi) Longo, the son of the politician Luigi Longo, who became secretary of the PCd’I from 1964 to 1972, after Palmiro Togliatti’s death. She spent some years in Italy before coming back to the Soviet Union in 1952.
- <sup>16</sup> <https://ria.ru/culture/20131113/976587606.html>.
- <sup>17</sup> [http://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/notizie/2014-04-16/da-gianni-rodari-opera-lirica-censura-russa-crisi-ucraina-143210.shtml?uud=ABZHWTBB&refresh\\_ce=1](http://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/notizie/2014-04-16/da-gianni-rodari-opera-lirica-censura-russa-crisi-ucraina-143210.shtml?uud=ABZHWTBB&refresh_ce=1)

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