

## Translation Under Communism

RUNDLE, CHRISTOPHER; LANGE, ANNE & MONTICELLI, DANIELE (eds.). 2022. *Translation Under Communism*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

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Translation as a practice is assumed to be as old as the “Tower of Babel”. However, Translation Studies as an independent discipline was recognized in the academic circle only in the 1960s. The field developed itself extensively, beyond imagination, within a short span of sixty years. The linguistic turn in the field of Translation Studies probably has its roots in the work of J. C. Catford’s *A Linguistic Theory of Translation*, published in 1965. A contemporary of Catford, Eugene Nida in his book *Towards a Science of Translating* (1964) made a concerted effort to make practice of translation more systematic and scientific. Gideon Toury’s remarkable contribution to the field through his books *In Search of a Theory of Translation* (1980), *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond* (1995) marked a paradigm shift in Translation Studies. Reflecting upon the importance of culture in the field of Translation Studies, André Lefevere in his work *Translation/History/Culture*, writes “Translation needs to be studied in connection with power and patronage, ideology and poetics, with emphasis on the various attempts to shore up or undermine an existing ideology or an existing poetics” (1992: 10). Highlighting the interplay between power, ideology and literary system, Edwin Gentzler, in his work *Contemporary Translation Theories*, refers, translation “as a strategy of resistance, one that disturbs and displaces the construction of images of non-Western cultures rather than reinterpret them using traditional, normalized concepts and language” (2001: 212).

In order to get a comprehensive understanding of a work, it is

highly essential to contextualize the work. The historical background mentioned above provides essential support to contextualize the newly arrived volume *Translation under Communism* (2022), edited by Christopher Rundle, Anne Lange & Daniele Monticelli. This volume could be viewed as a major development to the cultural approaches to translation initiated probably with André Lefevere's work *Translation, Rewriting and the Manipulation of Literary Fame; Translation, History and Culture* (1992). This volume could also be seen as part of series of readings such as *Modes of Censorship and Translation: National Contexts and Diverse Media* (2014) edited by Francesca Billiani and *Translation under Fascism* (2010) edited by Christopher Rundle and Kate Sturge.

Primarily, the volume is divided into four parts and contains fourteen chapters. The first part of the book includes two chapters. The second part consists of four chapters. The third part comprises seven chapters, while the fourth part has only one chapter.

Chapter 1 of the volume includes Introduction to the book. It is written collectively by the editors of the volume. The Introduction provides an insight into the need to study history from translation perspective. The writers highlight the significance of micro level analysis of translation to write a macro history of translation of a particular country. Historiography of translation of a particular region has become latest trend of research in the field of Translation Studies. It also brings forth the interdisciplinary nature of research in Translation Studies. This chapter also provides the readers an overview of the history of translation in the USSR & other former Eastern Bloc countries. Further, it explains the importance of historical context in the analysis of translation for any research work. The chapter concludes with a brief

account of the subject matters dealt in the remaining thirteen chapters of the book.

Chapter 2, titled “Translation and the History of European Communism” written collectively by Anne Lange, Daniele Monticelli, and Christopher Rundle, discusses the significance of cultural values in a socialist system. Further, it delves into the question i.e to what extent literary aesthetics are linked to the political ideology in the former USSR? Proceeding forward, the chapter also deals with the role played by the literary translation in the reconstruction of image and in promoting the principle of social realism of the Soviet Union. It highlights the use of literary translation as a tool by the Soviet Union for projecting a negative image of the capitalist countries and creating a positive image of self before the world. Further, the writers present a history of translation in the Soviet Union. Taking into account the historiography of translation in the Soviet Union, the writers analyse the translation strategies deployed by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union during the period of Lenin, Stalin and Gorbachev. In this chapter, they further discuss about the control mechanisms used by the Communist Party for the production of ideologically correct literary translations. Also, the chapter provides an insight into the role of publishing houses, editors and translators in a politically charged environment. The chapter further describes the process of Sovietization of society of former Eastern blocs. Lastly, the writers end the chapter by highlighting the importance of research on translation to understand the political and social structure of a communist system.

In chapter 3, Nataliia Rudnytska, through her work “Translation and the Formation of the Soviet Canon of World Literature”, discusses the state cultural policy of Soviet Union and how it influences selection of literary works for the creation of the Soviet canon of world literature. It further

elaborates on the relationship between the state cultural policy and ideology of Soviet Union. The writer further highlights the Soviet Union's internal policies for cultural homogenization and Russification of different 'Soviet people'. In the last part of the chapter, the writer analyses the changes in the strategies of literary translation with the change of regime in the Soviet Union.

Chapter 4, titled "Censorship, Permitted Dissent, and Translation Theory in the USSR: The Case of Kornei Chukovsky" written by Brian James Baer, begins with highlighting the importance attributed to translation after the October Revolution in the Soviet Union. The writer discusses further about the establishment of Vsemirnaia Literatura [World Literature] publishing house in 1918 and also the investment of resources for translation of major foreign literary works. Also, the writer refers to the earliest monograph on translation theory and practice, *Principles of Literary Translation* (1919), co-authored by Kornei Chukovsky and Nikolai Gumilev and explains Chukovsky's conceptualization of 'Lichnost', or creative identity or personality and its three features. The concluding part of the chapter analyses the shift in ideological landscape in Soviet Union historically and its impact on the concept of 'Lichnost'.

Chapter 5, titled "Translating Inferno: Mikhail Lozinskii, Dante and the Soviet Myth of the Translator" by Susanna Witt, investigates into the historical development of the translation process in the early Soviet years. Further, she elaborates on the translation projects initiated by the regimes, their motives and establishment of Glavlit [The main administration for literary and publishing affairs] in 1922 as the Soviet censorship apparatus. To highlight the ideologically motivated translation practice in the Soviet Union, the writer analyses the famous translation of Dante's *Divina commedia* by the poet-translator Mikhail Lozinskii. She further investigates into the appropriation

of Dante's *Divina commedia* to reinforce its internationalist image by the Soviet Union. In conclusion, the writer highlights the importance of context in the analysis of role of translator in a society.

In chapter 6, Oleksandr Kalnychenko and Lada Kolomiyets in "Translation in Ukraine During the Stalinist Period: Literary Translation Policies and Practices" trace the historical development of translation process in Ukraine. The authors analyse the translation in the period of active Ukrainization in the UkrSSR during Stalin era. Further, they discuss the change in ideological atmosphere in the mid-1930s and its impact on the theory and practice of translation in Ukraine. Russian became a relay language for translation of western literature into Ukrainian. The authors, at the end of the chapter, deal with the question i.e how Ukrainian intelligentsia used literary translation to resist Russification of Ukrainian language and cultural homogenization.

Chapter 7, titled "The Politics of Translation in Yugoslavia from 1945 to 1952" by Maria Rita Leto, investigates into the systematic intervention of Yugoslav Communist Party in the cultural life of Yugoslavian. She discusses the role of Agitprop to control all kinds of cultural activities in Yugoslavia. Besides, the writer highlights the difference in translation strategies in the period 1945-48 and 1949-52. During 1945 to 1948, the Yugoslavian adopted Soviet model for all kinds of cultural activities. The author further describes the breakdown in the relationship between Stalin and Joseph Tito in 1948 and its impact on economic, social, cultural policies of Yugoslavia. Leto ends the chapter by highlighting the role of translation in bringing in new voices, new cultural model and new visions of the world in the Yugoslavian society with the change in cultural policies after 1948.

Chapter 8, titled "Ideological Control in a Slovene Socialist State Publishing House: Conformity and Dissent" by Nike K.

Pokorn, uses archives of Central Committee of the Communist Party of Slovenia and the Socialist Alliance of the Working People of Slovenia, and interviews of editors, Mladinska Knjiga publishing house to discuss the importance of translation for successful propagation of communist ideology and the role of institution like Agitprop for controlling anti-Soviet propaganda. The author concludes by discussing the role of translation in indoctrination of children in a totalitarian and authoritarian regime.

In chapter 9, Anikó Sohár in “Anyone Who Isn’t Against Us Is for Us’: Science Fiction Translated from English During the Kádár Era in Hungary (1956–89)” traces the shifts in the role of literature and literary translation of Science Fictions in the Kadar era. She further discusses how literature and translation were understood as engineers of human souls. She explains further the manipulation of translation to indoctrinate people with materialistic, atheistic and anticlerical propaganda and generate communist consciousness among them. Lastly, the writer refers to the work of Istvan Bart to highlight the modes of censorship such as overt, covert, and self-censorship operational in Hungary to contain writers and translators of ‘incorrect ideology’.

Chapter 10, titled “The Impact of Cultural Policy in the GDR on the Work of Translators” by Hanna Blum, begins with the discussion of the role of translation in the formation of literary canon of German Democratic Republic (GDR) or East Germany. In this article, the author further highlights the literary translation strategies adopted by the GDR to construct a socialist society. She vividly explains the intervention of the Party in the cultural life of the GDR. Further, she highlights the role of literature and literary translation in GDR to fight against US imperialism, racial ideology and to create a socialist man. In conclusion, the author presents the role of institution like the Office for Literature and Publishing (Amt

für Literatur und Verlagswesen), founded in 1951, for censoring the works of writers and translators, which were against the principle of Social Realism.

Chapter 11, titled “The Allen Ginsberg ‘Case’ and Translation (in) History: How Czechoslovakia Elected and Then Expelled the King of May” by Igor Tyšš, analyses the translation practices in Czechoslovakia to understand its history. For his study, he investigates into the case of a well-known Czechoslovakian poet Allen Ginsberg, to showcase the silencing campaign carried out against him systematically by the regime. In his work, Tyšš tries to highlight the functioning of socialist translation system under a highly centralized administrative system.

In chapter 12, Krasimira Ivleva, in her article “Literary Translation in Communist Bulgaria (1944–89)”, traces the history of literary translation in Bulgaria from the period 1944 to 1989. To analyse the history of literary translation practice in Bulgaria in a more systematic manner, she investigates deep into the historical context of this period. The author divides his study into two time periods. According to the author, the first period (1944-1956) deals with the advent and consolidation of power by the Communist Party and Russification of political, economic and social life of the country. Further, the author investigates into the era of Lyudmila Zhivkova (1956-1970) and vividly describes the ‘carrot and stick’ policy adopted by him to control the intelligentsia. The author further discusses the role of the Committee of Science, Art and Culture (in Bulgarian Komitet za Nauka, Izkustvo i Kultura, or KNIK) as mechanism of censorship to control cultural life and publishing houses of the country. In the last part of her article, the writer brings to the light the social position of the translators in Communist Bulgaria and also reflects upon the double-mission of educating the masses and bringing new writings into the Bulgarian literary system allocated to them by the regime.

Chapter 13, titled “Underground Fiction Translation in People’s Poland, 1976–89” by Robert Looby, deals with the publishing strategies during Stalin era, Second circulation and Third circulation period. The author highlights the emergence of concept of underground publisher, author and translator and their role in the Second circulation period i.e after the death of Stalin in 1956. Also, he vividly describes the emergence of Samizdat publishing and its significance in understanding the literary history of Communist Poland. The author further explains the paradigm shift in the attitude of Communist party of Poland which lead to relaxation in the censorship on publishers, authors and translators. However, the author in his conclusion puzzled by the finding that the Samizdat publishing with a clear anti-communist agenda, often employed the same translators, published the same authors and even used the same presses as the official publishing system.

In chapter 14, Vitaly Chernetsky, in his article “A Battle for Translation” gives an account on the importance laid on the literary system especially on the translation by the Communist Party of USSR and other Eastern bloc countries to achieve their goal of social revolution and of constructing of the new world. The writer further explains how translation was deployed as a tool to propagate ideas of Marx, Lenin, Engels to a wider population. The author provides a brief summary of each chapter in this volume to get a better understanding of the book for the readers. Chernetsky ends this chapter by hinting at some of the topics which could be taken up for further research by the future generations.

This volume provides an insight into one of the current trends in the field of Translation Studies i.e historical analysis of theories and practices in a particular region. The volume traces the historical development of translation practices and theories in the USSR and other Eastern bloc countries such as Poland,



Ukraine, East Germany, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Yugoslavia. Systematic analysis of the volume provides a linkage between the chapters. Hence, the volume provides a comprehensive understanding of the theme presented in each chapter. Case study approach to Translation Studies research gives this volume an authenticity. Also reference to archival materials and interviews of editors of publishing houses highlight the importance of investigative research in the field of Translation Studies and encourages researchers to use such research methodology for their research works. The structure of each chapter is coherent and the language of each chapter is easily comprehensible for a research scholar of Translation Studies. The volume would be highly useful for the researchers of Translation Studies delving into the contextual aspect of translation. The volume has been conceived thoughtfully and managed well by the editors.

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