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Technical Translations in the Service of Political and Scientific Communication in Post-War Romania. The Case of Russian Translations and the Role of Arlus-Russian Book Publishing House

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Abstract: The place of translations in the process of interpersonal communication can be defined on the one hand by referring to the linguistic aspect of the act of translation, so to the linguistic role of translation as a communication tool, and, on the other hand, by recalling the epistemological value of translation seen as an opener of the road to knowledge in a broad sense. In fact, translation unites cultures, creates bridges to knowledge and participates in its spread. However, for the current research, we have chosen to talk about the social role of translations, which, beyond their linguistic and epistemological role, can become a political and scientific communication tool at the disposal of some social actors holding political power. We will briefly present here the role of technical translations in political-ideological and technical-scientific communication in Romanian society from the immediate post-war years in Romania, which entered an accelerated process of sovietisation of society. Translations became an instrument of political power used in changing mentalities, in educating the masses according to Soviet standards and in the political transformation of society.

Keywords: *translations; political and scientific communication; sovietisation of society; Romania; political power.*

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Introduction

The place of translations in the process of interpersonal communication can be defined on the one hand by referring to the *linguistic aspect* of the act of translation, so to the linguistic role of translation as a communication tool, and, on the other hand, by recalling the *epistemological value* of translation seen as an opener of the road to knowledge in a broad sense. In fact, translation unites cultures, creates bridges to knowledge and participates in its spread. However, for the current research, we have chosen to talk about the *social role* of translations, which, beyond their linguistic and epistemological role, can become a political and scientific communication tool at the disposal of some social actors holding political power. We refer here strictly to *technical translations*: not from the perspective of the internal mechanisms, techniques and means used, which are the subject of the various theories of translation developed by the great translation schools, concerned with the study of meaning, equivalents, fidelity to the source text, of the ways and types of translation, strategies and rules of translation, etc., but we will refer to the act of translation from a historical-pragmatic perspective, linking translation to the socio-political context in order to determine one of its *roles* in interpersonal communication. We will briefly present here the role of technical translations in political-ideological and technical-scientific communication in Romanian society from the immediate post-war years in Romania, which entered an accelerated process of sovietisation of society. We will see here how translations became an instrument of political power used in changing mentalities, in educating the masses according to Soviet standards and in the political transformation of society. We specify here that the current research presents some conclusions of an extensive research carried out within the project "A history of translations in the Romanian language", initiated by Professor Dr. Muguras Constantinescu, at the Technical-Scientific Translations section (Catau-Veres, 2020).

Translations, a linguistic mediator in effective communication: more than the transfer of meaning

The place of translations in the interpersonal communication process could be determined starting from the representation of the act of communication in the view of the French linguist Catherine Kerbrat Orecchioni who, in her work *L'énonciation de la subjectivité dans le langage* (Kerbrat Orecchioni, 1980) proposes a completion of the scheme of the

communication process made by Roman Jakobson. She says that in the process of encoding and decoding the message by the Sender and Receiver, a series of *constraints* of the discursive universe must be taken into account, among which we find the *linguistic* and paralinguistic *skills,* along with the *ideological and cultural skills*, as well as the *psychological determinations* of communication partners. This addition brought by Kerbrat-Orecchioni regarding the existence of linguistic *discursive constraints* invites reflection on the place of the act of translation in communication. More than being a *transfer of meaning* from one linguistic system to another, translation, based on the possession of the linguistic code of the other, i.e. of sufficient *linguistic competences* to transmit the message in such a way that the other can decode it, favours communication or contribute to its *efficiency*. In fact, in the absence of possession of that common code by the Emitter and Receiver, the communication process would be compromised. This is where translation comes in as a *reparative act* that allows communication partners to meet on a common linguistic ground (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 1980, pp. 21-22; 30-38).

Beyond their role as a linguistic mediator, translations also have an epistemological value, fully participating in the process of transmitting science and knowledge in a broad sense. Or, favouring the transmission of science and knowledge, translations respond to man's unlimited need to discover, thus turning into a science communication tool, which in turn can turn into a symbol, an ideological, cultural, sought-after or imposed model.

The role of technical-scientific translations in the post-war Romanian space

The epistemological value of translations, doubled by a mission of socio-political-cultural mediator, constituted the foundation of their evolution in the 20th century in the post-war Romanian space. In addition to the transfer of meaning, translation is a complex process of mediating communication, knowing that in addition to meaning, elements related to the ideology and culture of the sender and the source language are transferred to the target language. Translation thus becomes a way of accelerated imposition in Romania of the 1950s-1960s of elements of Eastern culture, science and ideology within a process of accelerated sovietisation of Romanian society.

In the 20th century, worldwide, translations in the field of science and technology were marked by major changes due to technical-scientific progress and the appearance of new theories that shook the world of science, requiring a rapid and permanent updating and adaptation of

terminology as a basic tool of translators. The latter were first of all good connoisseurs of the source language and the target language, but above all specialists in the scientific fields for which they were translating.

In Romania in the last century, translators were faced with a double challenge: on the one hand, to keep up with the evolution of science worldwide and, on the other hand, to adapt to socio-political mutations, determined by the major events that they strongly marked the Romanian society and culture. It is about the Two World Wars, the establishment of post-war Soviet socialism in the 1950s, the establishment of communism (1960-1989) and access to democracy (starting in 1990). The scientific and technical translations from the Romanian space closely followed these political mutations, conforming to the conditions imposed by the various regimes, putting themselves at the service of the scientific and ideological communication of the time.

In the immediate post-war period, especially in the years 1950-1960 and until 1989, the priority source language of scientific and technical translations into Romanian was Russian, due to the sovietisation process to which Romanian society was subjected during that period, the scientific model forced to be translated and vulgarized being that of the scientists from the USSR. Moreover, the acceleration of the dissemination of Soviet science in Romania was organized by the Romanian political regime of those years in accordance with the constraints exercised and with the instructions received from the USSR, creating editorial structures aimed at promoting the formation of the "new man" through translations of Russian authors. Founded on November 12, 1944, the ARLUS Association (Romanian Association for Strengthening Links with the Soviet Union) acted in this sense in Romania in the immediate post-war years, also owning a series of publications and institutions that presented the Soviet model, the cultural and scientific achievements of scientists from the USSR, the only source of inspiration for the "new man". Obviously, beyond translations from Russian, technical translations from English, French and German were also carried out, but in a much smaller proportion.

Radiography of Romanian society from the 1950s-1960s. Translations into Romanian between the years 1944-1965 (ARLUS Association and the sovietisation of Romanian society)

After the end of the Second World War, the first communist government was imposed in Romania by the Soviet Union, on March 6, 1945, led by Dr. Petru Groza. Thus began a strong pro-communist

propaganda of Soviet origin in the field of arts and sciences, with the aim of convincing the population about "the benefits, achievements and goodwill of the Romanian-Soviet regime and friendship" (Ionescu, n.d.).

On November 12, 1944, the association ARLUS (Romanian Association for Strengthening Links with the Soviet Union) was founded, bringing together Romanian intellectuals with left-wing convictions, with Prof. C. I. Parhon as its president. Shortly after the establishment of this association that wanted to reflect the friendship between two countries (Romania and the USSR), its organizational chart appears showing twelve directions of pro-Soviet propaganda action in as many fields of the social and cultural life of the country: army, economy, education, literature, philosophy, media, sports, tourism, sciences, transport and communications, applied sciences, etc.

The ARLUS association opens its own publishing house, the ARLUS-Russian Book Publishing House and the Russian Book Bookstore (1945), also owning a series of publications and institutions that presented the Soviet model, the cultural and scientific achievements of the scientists from the USSR, the only source of inspiration for the "new man": the weekly magazine *New Age* (the press organ of the association, with the first issue published on December 10, 1944, which brought together 56 collaborators, all communist intellectuals and leaders), *New Language* (the newspaper of the Soviet Army in Romania) and *The New News* (newspaper from 1946), the House of Romanian-Soviet Friendship and the Institute of Romanian-Soviet Studies (1947), the Maxim Gorki Russian Language Institute (June 7, 1948), the *Romanian-Soviet Annals* (magazine from 1946), the Romanian-Russian Museum (1948), etc. (Negrescu-Suţu, n.d.).

In a study entitled "Light comes from the East. The new image of the Soviet Union in post-war Romania. 1944-1947" appeared in the volume *Myths of Romanian Communism* (coordinator Lucian Boia), Bucharest, Bucharest University Publishing House, 1995, Adrian Cioroianu presents in detail the establishment and explicit mission of this association, to sovietise society post-war Romanians, primarily through the translations of the works of Russian scholars into Romanian. The latter would promote the USSR as a new geophysical entity, the Soviet state as a new and superior type of state, the "new man" (embodied in six standard profiles: the Stakhanovite worker, the Soviet child, the Soviet woman, the scholar, the soldier, and the agitator or the party propagandist), but especially "Soviet science or the miraculous as an everyday fact". We mention that through the translations carried out exclusively from Russian at the time, the Romanian society would learn about the polyglot Prof. N. V. Ismanov (from the University of Leningrad)

who spoke and wrote perfectly in 200 languages, about "Stalinite", a new building material, about the white coats in which the miners will work on the surface of the soil, using machines and devices for extractions, about the wheat crossed with the pear, which gave 100 grains to an ear) and the variety 599, a species of wheat resistant to polar temperatures (the invention of the Russian agronomist N. V. Tîtîn, 1945), about colchicine or the substance that doubles the size of plants, even in vertical plants, invention of Russian scientists V. V. Sakharov, S. L. Frolova and V. V. Mansurova from the Institute of Cytology in Moscow, not forgetting the cure against cancer discovered by scientists N. Klineva and G. Roskin, about the elixir of eternal youth or the cytotoxic antireticular serum that doubled the average lifespan, discovered by the Russian scientist Alexandr Bogomolet, or the complex method of reanimation of the body, which would have given positive results when applied to animals or soldiers, even after 20 minutes after their death (the discovery of scientists Kuliabko, Ceciliu and Andreev) (Ciroianu, 1995, pp. 76-109).

Translations of Soviet ideological and political economy works

The "Russian Book" publishing house translates a Russian textbook in 1945, and in 1946 publishes 131 cultural-ideological and scientific propaganda works translated exclusively from Russian (49 volumes in Romanian and 9 in Hungarian), in circulations of approx. 6,000-20,000 copies (for volumes in Romanian) and between 4,000 and 7,000 copies for volumes in Hungarian (Catalan, 2005). Also, the publication "Romanian-Soviet Annals - Science and Philosophy Bulletin of the Romanian-Soviet Institute of Culture", published monthly, was the basis of the cultural-scientific propaganda aimed at the accelerated Sovietisation of Romanian society. All the articles that were published here were translations exclusively from the Russian language. The topics proposed in the sections of the magazine (physics, mathematics, chemistry, technical sciences, geography-geology, economic sciences, history, philosophy, law, medicine, etc.) praise the "huge technical, scientific and cultural achievements of the country of peace and socialism", emphasizing the greatness and importance of the Russian nation, the culture and research of the Soviet people. The "Stalin" prizes rewarded the inventions of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, and this was published in the Romanian environment so that the Romanians could see the "Soviet reality" and serve as a model for them in the "work of reconstructing the country" (Catalan, 2005).

Even now, translations from Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin, as well as from various scientific fields in which Soviet researchers were involved, are also being published. Ideological writings enjoyed a special place in translation, as was the case with the work Capital by Karl Marx, translated in 1947 and reviewed in a laudatory manner by Lucreţiu Pătrăşcanu in *The spark* of August 2, 1947. During that period, in the years 1947- 1948, groups of Russian language translators were organized. The translations were not always signed, but undertaken by collectives of translators working alongside the publishing houses, possibly benefiting from a preface signed by a representative of the Romanian scientific world, or from a review in the main scientific publications in Romania at that time. The purpose of these translations was to make available the most important studies, articles, documents of Soviet origin in order to be able to use the Russian experience in the progress and "reconstruction" of Romanian society.

"Through its press organs, ARLUS continued to present the USSR as the most developed country in the world, reaching in 1947-1948 that the Soviets held primacy in almost the majority of fields of science and culture", as Russian propaganda claimed (Catalan, 2005). The role of translations from Russian into Romanian was therefore, in that era, to modify social and national mentalities, to annihilate the traditional conceptions of the Romanian people, to erase the autochthonous cultural characteristics and to "implants collectivist, pseudo-modern and profoundly anachronistic, even traumatizing customs" (Catalan, 2005).

In the publishing field, we mention here three important publishing houses that were created to complete the sovietisation project of Romanian society: the Publishing House of the Romanian Communist Party, the General Confederation of Labour and the ARLUS Publishing House – Russian Book. They published autochthonous and Soviet party documents translated into Romanian, the classics of Marxism-Leninism (with a circulation of over 1.2 million volumes, of which 580,000 are for Stalin's works alone), translations from Russian classical literature and from the Soviet, various science popularization materials, technical-scientific works, philosophy. *Capital* by Marx (vol. I appeared in 1947), works by Engels, Lenin, Stalin, works by some Soviet communist leaders (Zhdanov, *Report on the magazines Zveda and Leningrad*, 1948, Kemenov, *The Decadence of Bourgeois Art*, 1947 and *The Characteristics of two cultures,* 1948) were printed in total in over 12 million volumes, contributing together with the ARLUS association to the achievement of the ultimate goal, that of orienting the Romanian social-cultural life towards Sovietism and towards the glorification of "Soviet achievements", which became "ideals" of the Romanian nation wishing at

that time to build a socialist society according to the model from the Risen (Catalan, 2005; Cioroianu, 1995).

The death of Stalin (1953) leads to the distancing of the Romanian Communist Party from Moscow, the Soviet troops being withdrawn. The de-Sovietisation of Romanian society will reach its peak in 1963, when the pro-Soviet institutions in Romania are closed: the Maxim Gorki Institute, *New Times* Magazine, and the Romanian-Soviet friendship association ARLUS, with its press organs, is dissolved. However, translations from Russian in the technical-scientific field will continue throughout the years of communism in Romania, with an emphasis between the years 1960-1980, alongside translations from other languages, such as French, German, Bulgarian, English, etc., being published in especially at the Technical Publishing House, Political Publishing House, Scientific and Encyclopaedic Publishing House, Didactic and Pedagogical Publishing House or Albatros Publishing House.

Conclusion

To conclude this historical-pragmatic perspective on the role of translations in political and propaganda-scientific communication in Romania after the Second World Wars, we will remind you that in addition to the transfer of meaning that the act of translation implies, it also has a reparative linguistic role by mediating the meeting of communication partners on a common linguistic ground. This linguistic role is doubled by epistemological value, because translations respond to the need for discovery and knowledge of man vis-a-vis the extra-linguistic universe, but translations can at the same time be a tool in political-ideological and technical-scientific communication, as they have proven to be the translations from the Russian language in Romania of the last century, an instrument at the disposal of the dominant political power to transform the mentality of the Romanian society according to the Soviet patterns.

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