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**Actes du XVII^e Congrès mondial
Fédération Internationale des Traducteurs**



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Translators of the regime: The profession during the Salazar dictatorship in Portugal

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When I realized that this paper would be presented under the heading "Status of the Profession" I started thinking if there was such thing in the time of Oliveira Salazar in Portugal. To begin with translators, when working for the State, were not recognized as such, although they were commissioned to translate. They were simply public servants and therefore living in a state of non-status.

This presentation comprises several sections. Firstly some context to the subject will be provided, followed by some important background on how translation and censorship were related during Salazar's dictatorship. The success of foreign literature translations will then be briefly approached and later attention will be drawn on the importance of translators working for the regime.

Context

Censorship refers globally to the suppression of information in several forms and happened in different places all over Europe (Merkle 2002:9). As it is known censorship still exists today in many same or other forms I will mention in this paper:

If we go back to Freud's writings in *Die Traumdeutung* we will understand that censorship mechanisms exist in order to create a censor in each individual (Freud 1981: 656-720). If these individuals are creators living in a dictatorship things might get worse. It is not difficult to understand the situation is not easier for translators.

Between 1926 and 1974 Portugal lived under a dictatorship, first a military one and then another one divided in two periods starting from 1932: under Oliveira Salazar (1932-1968) and Marcelo Caetano (1968-1974).

Since 1926 there was a centralized censor department, although the history of censorship in Portugal goes back to several centuries before. There was only one state press agency and newspapers had to apply to that agency for news.

In September 1933 a Propaganda Office was set up (*Secretariado de Propaganda Nacional - SPN*), its task being the centralization and control of every public manifestation, regardless of its nature. The law that created SPN states that its role was also to "coordinate all information regarding actions from the several

ministries, in order to show evidence, in our country and other, that the Portuguese State lives in a spirit of unification, when referring to past and future works". (My translation of Decreto-Lei 23:054, 25th September 1933, artº 2)

In the following decades the name of the office changed to *Serviço Nacional de Informação, Cultura Popular e Turismo* (1944-68) and later to *Secretaria de Estado de Informação e Turismo* (1968-74) but not its action, which, in fact, became more and more rigid. It spread from Lisbon to every corner of the country and even to the colonies. The SPN was greatly helped in its efforts by the political police, PIDE.

For Salazar the office was not rigid enough. That is why years later the dictator himself decided to control all the mechanisms of censorship. (Azevedo 1997:15)

Relation between translation and censorship

Before proceeding any further terminology regarding different types of censorship should be cleared. Regarding the Portuguese example we can say the system was divided in two types of the phenomena: prior and post-censorship. This classification is drawn on Merkle's introduction to the TTR issue on Censorship and Translation. (Merkle 2002: 11-12)

Prior censorship happened mostly with newspapers and magazines. Every single piece of writing in it should go through censorship first and censors would expect a journalist to rewrite the same piece of news two, three times a night, so that the result would be convenient to the regime.

Post-censorship resulted mainly in the banning of books. And many were banned. Studies made by the *Comissão do Livro Negro do Regime Fascista* (Black Book Commission on the Fascist Regime, my translation), whose purpose was to analyze the real action of censorship during dictatorship, came up with a surprising number. Over 75 thousand books were apprehended in publishers' storages and over 3.000 titles were banned. A famous case is the banning of *Time Magazine* for several years, because on the 22nd July 1946 it published a cover story on Salazar calling him the dean of dictators.

Gideon Toury explains that censorial

... mechanisms are often resorted to post factum, after the act of translation has been terminated, by way of [post]-editing, whether by the translator him-/herself or by some other agent, who may have had a different kind of training and was charged with other responsibilities. Often, such a reviser is not even required to know the source language, and even if s/he does, it is not necessarily the case that s/he

also falls back on it. Censorship can also be activated during the act of translation itself though, inasmuch as the translator has internalized the norms pertinent to the culture, and uses them as constant monitoring device. (Touy 1995: 278).

To some extent this was possibly what translators had to face in those difficult days.

Until now I have not found evidence of an official policy regarding translations but several authors have suggested the existence of *unwritten rules* (my emphasis) which may be classified as self-censorship. (José Saramago, cited in Azevedo 1999: 32)

In 1943 *La Joie de Vivre* by Émile Zola was translated into Portuguese and the censor who read the translation reported the following on May 15th: "The French edition has been authorized, but when reading certain detailed passages in translation, I realize that publishing this book may not be convenient" and suggests the book to be forbidden. (SPN/SNI File 628, Report 2241)

Another report, from July 3rd the same year tells us that the translation of *The Professor* by Charlotte Brontë should not be allowed based on the fact that there are some passages on social upheaval. Although the recommendation was to ban the book, the truth is that it ended up being published. (SPN/SNI File 628, Report 2312)

Examples like these show us that it was very difficult for translators to guess what went through the censor's mind.

While state control was concentrated on newspapers and national literature, novels in translation flourished and circulated in great number. The dissemination of foreign literature under a totalitarian regime might seem surprising, because the agenda was naturally nationalistic. Anything that was alien to Portuguese culture was regarded as suspicious, but it is not possible to fully agree with this statement. Domestic readers preferred foreign literature and critics would state that there was an excessive amount of translations available. (Seruya 2004:39)

In the *Gabinete de Leitura* (Reading Office), official readers, some of them only holding primary education, would censor books after being printed. Many publishers even announced the books they were going to publish hoping that they would be ignored.

Research into the censorship of books in Portugal during the dictatorship is difficult, documents are missing and although reports of the censors were recently made public. On one hand it must be said that records referring to several years are missing, others are incomplete. On the other there are a lot of details concerning one specific work.

Publisher did not want their books to be banned after publication because this represented a heavy financial burden and to prevent this they were careful enough not to publish anything that would attract the censor's attention.

Impediments to publication were subjects such as: suicide, incest, sex, religion and politics and even referring to censorship itself. (Memo cited in Azevedo 1999: 387-388)

The press and film industry were closely controlled by the State and although there are several examples of censorship in books, publishing industry was allowed a greater margin of freedom, even if many books were censored. (Azevedo 1999:492-493)

Sometimes censors would allow a book based on the fact that it had been circulating for too many years in its source language, although the translation was not considered as being good or adequate for the Portuguese people. All major Portuguese authors were either imprisoned or in exile, others worked as translators and later became well known writers themselves.

Translators of the regime

The regime wanted favorable opinions from abroad reported and therefore a team of translators were employed by the SPN to scan foreign press and translate articles of interest. A section of this Office was dedicated to external propaganda and therefore to translation. Archaeological work in the Oliveira Salazar Archive (AOS) has proven that in those days the State was heavily worried with its image around the world and there was a huge amount of work translated by the so-called "official translators". (AOS/CO/PC-16A)

In 1968 the SPN had a list of translators working for them, translating from and into so different languages as Japanese, Danish, French, Hungarian, German and English. The topics translators had to deal with were tourism but also politics, mainly speeches by Salazar himself. Those translations were a way to change the image Portugal had in Anglophone countries, but also in Northern Europe. (SPN Archive, file 607/4717)

After the II World War official translations had increased a lot and even the rising budget allocated to translation is a reflection of that.

Although all the official translators worked for the SPN they were in fact commissioned by the Foreign Office Ministry, the Interior Ministry and even Salazar himself.

Conclusion

Following the main ideas of this paper it can be concluded that the censorship of books in Portugal was rather subjective and translators suffered with this.

Whilst the regime's attitude towards translation may appear to be inconsistent when regarding translated literature, the same regime needed translators for their propaganda outside Portugal.

Therefore, it can be said that the regime failed in controlling translations except the obvious ones and it can also be said that the regime succeeded in having propaganda massively translated.

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Legislation

Decreto-Lei 23:054, 25th November 1933

Archive Files

SPN/ADS/628
AOS/CO/PC-16A

Shaping Chinese modernity through translation – A brief discussion on Liang Qi-chao's translation practice

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Background of Liang's translation practice

The late 19th Century was China's darkest period, witnessing the decline of a strong nation. In this period, China was invaded and defeated by Japan and Western nations; part of its territory was receded and colonized. China became a semi-feudal, semi-colonial nation. In this situation, Chinese intellectuals sought truth and learning from the West. They wanted to reform China, to win freedom and democracy. Liang Chi-chao (1873–1929) was then a leader of the Reformation Movement striving to topple the Imperial government and build a strong, new nation. The reformation was put down by Chi-chi, the mother of the Tsing Emperor. The Emperor was imprisoned and powerless, and Liang Chi-chao was exiled to Japan for some years. Hopeless, he turned to writing and translating as other ways of educating the Chinese people and shaping Chinese modernity.

Liang contributed much to translation in China, but his work has not been evaluated favorably. A survey shows that out of 464 articles published in 1994–2003 and covering literature, journalism, language, etc., only four dealt with his translation criticism. The reason is apparent: Liang's translation does not meet the translation standard of faithfulness, an isolated viewpoint which is only suitable for a linguistic approach but never for a cultural analysis. Liang's translation practice is an integral part of his academic achievement and reflects partially on modern Chinese pioneers' commitment to democracy and freedom in their hard-won process of learning from the West. It is apparent that translation in this case has been marginalized or alienated to become a simple tool and supplement of literature, rather than a "sharp sword" transforming a society and culture.

In translating, the translator plays a major role. As a main figure in a period of cultural transition of the 20th Century, Liang's literary translation practice can be inspirational for Chinese scholars so far as "WHAT TO TRANSLATE" is concerned. Liang's stance is apparent: to reform the old China and educate his people through translation. The strategies of his translation practice can be summed up as: 1) translating political novels for educational purposes; 2) retranslating Western works and introducing new terminologies from Japanese versions; 3) rewriting and manipulation in translation; 4) using newspapers and journals to spread literary