



SIMPOSIO INTERNACIONAL SOBRE TRADUCCIÓN Y EDUCACIÓN

ACTUALIDAD Y DESAFÍOS EN LA FORMACIÓN SUPERIOR DE TRADUCTORES

Plenaria 6

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The contradictory functions of translation in communist Romania

It is well-known that the European communist regimes, drawing on the Soviet model, largely encouraged translations, organizing, ever since the 1950's, unprecedented translation campaigns. They were initially meant to impose the Soviet cultural model on the other satellite states and then, increasingly, to ensure the best conditions for the exchange of "progressive" ideas among (communist) countries from the most diverse geographical spaces. Romania made no exception to this pattern. However, during the communist period translation policies in this country had their own dynamics, and were not deprived of paradoxes, ultimately contributing to the survival of western democratic values, despite almost 50 years of harshest communist dictatorship in Europe. Thus, in Romania translation was both a strong ideological instrument in the service of the communist power and a subtle form of undermining this very ideology. It is these "contradictory functions" of translation that this paper attempts to capture through a thick contextualization of the period. On the one hand, translations are shown to operate as an important ally of the communist regime, as a solution and a response when it came to illustrating, via masterpieces of world literature, such key theoretical concepts of communist ideology as, for instance, "mass culture", "new person", "international solidarity", "progressive views", etc. On the other hand, though, the paper reveals ways in which translations also subverted the mainstream ideology of the time. Skillful translation policies carried out by some of the main publishing houses, judicious selection of texts for translation, high quality cultural publications in which translations held a privileged position, cultural/translation-related events featuring anti-system debates, were only a few such bold initiatives. It is, no doubt, one of the paradoxes of the Romanian communist period that, through its translation campaigns, instead of creating submissive subjects it ultimately had a share in the country's long, painful, nevertheless steady advance in the democratic direction.