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# *Cultus*

THE JOURNAL OF INTERCULTURAL  
MEDIATION AND COMMUNICATION

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**Past and present  
in translation collaborative practices and  
cooperation**

*Guest Editors*

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## Industrialisation of translation and collaborative practices in the Greek translations of Marxist texts

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### *Abstract*

*This paper investigates how collaborative translation practices were employed in the Greek translations of theoretical Marxist texts published by the Communist Party of Greece in the 1950s. The party's efforts to dominate Marxist discourse required the codification of Marxist theory and the creation of accurate translations and retranslations of theoretical Marxist texts. To this end, a specific model of collaboration was developed based on the principles of industrial production, and conceptualised here as "industrialisation of translation" (Mosso 2006). The translation process resembled a production line where, at different stages, each contributor added a part until the completion of a translation. The translation process is analysed by adapting indicators of industrialisation from Mosso (2006), e.g., large quantities of materials to be translated, centralization of translation, intensification of work, division of labor, and quality control and employee discipline, to show how collaboration was central both to the completion of translations and to claims about their accuracy.*

*Keywords: collaborative translation, translation and Marxism, Marxism in Greece, history of Marxism, translation and communism.*

### 1. Introduction

The study of collaborative practices in translation highlights the fact "that translation involves more than one writing subject and more than one interpretive position" (Bistué 2013: 1). These practices encompass an array of relations and configurations, from dyadic interactions (Zanotti 2020; Heller and Hawkins 2020) to extensive teamwork which may involve a thousand contributors (St. André 2010). They can take place in formal or informal groups (Yang 2020; Zielinska-Elliott and Kaminka 2016) where contributors may occupy a variety of roles as translators, revisers, proofreaders, editors and publishers. However, despite its long history,

collaborative translation is a neglected area of research in Translation Studies, so it is a welcome development that this is now changing with more studies, from monographs to edited volumes and journal special issues (Bistué 2013; Cordingley and Frigau Manning 2016; Zwischenberger 2020) including this volume. But, with some exceptions (Bingenheimer 2010; Neather 2012), the focus of such research remains on literary texts and concerns mostly contemporary contexts and online interactions (Heller 2016; Jiménez-Crespo 2017; Yang 2020) enabled by technological innovations (O'Hagan 2009; Díaz Cintas and Muñoz Sánchez 2006). On the other hand, and even though Marxist ideas have been key in most areas of intellectual production as well as in events that have shaped our world, there has been little attention in Translation Studies on the translation of works by Marx and Engels. Even recent interest in translation in the communist era in the USSR and Eastern Europe (Baer and Witt 2017; Rundle *et al.* 2022) concerns mostly literature and religion, and do not specifically attend to the translation of Marxist or more broadly political texts.

This paper contributes to historical research in collaborative translation by investigating the ways in which collaboration was operationalized in the translations of Marxist theoretical texts. These translations were commissioned by the Communist Party of Greece [Κομμουνιστικό Κόμμα Ελλάδας, henceforth KKE], and performed by a group of its members, employed by the party specifically for this task, with different responsibilities and roles (e.g., translators, revisers and proof-readers). They were political refugees based in Bucharest, Romania, where the party apparatus had converged after the party's defeat in the civil war (1946-1949).<sup>1</sup> So, although translation was carried out by communists living in a country of the Eastern bloc, it was not a state-sponsored initiative. The paper aims at foregrounding the social structures and conditions in which collaboration took place and translation was carried out and, as Kalnychenko and Kolomiyets (2022: 142) note, to contribute to “what translation can say about the history of communism”. It will be argued that the model of collaboration that was put in place was organized on the principles of industrial production and bore similarities to a production line. Collaboration served as a way to both codify Marxist theory and to create (the impression of) accurate translations.

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<sup>1</sup> The civil war (1946-1949) was fought between the regular Greek army with the support of Britain and, later, the US and the Democratic Army of Greece (DSE) [Δημοκρατικός Στρατός Ελλάδας] formed by the KKE.

In their recent work on *Translation under communism*, Rundle *et al.* (2022: 7), call for a greater attention to archival research in order to connect translation with its social and historical context. This paper responds to this call by utilizing biographies of those involved in translation work, party publications from the period of study discussing aspects of translation, secondary sources and archival textual material. The latter have been collected from the KKE's archive, located at the Contemporary Social History Archives (ASKI) in Athens and available to the public. The documents from ASKI used here include a) staff lists, that provide information on the contributors' identities, remuneration and responsibilities, which, in turn, indicate their places in the organization's hierarchy and the tasks they performed; b) production reports; and c) decisions and notes of correspondence between various party bodies which convey the party's policies and procedures and comment on their successes and failures. Unfortunately, no translation drafts exist in the archive, so this study also encountered the same problems noted by Hersant (2016: 98) and also Zanotti (2020: 221) who laments the "paucity of textual evidence of the [translation] process" and the difficulty in finding materials that record the dynamics between collaborators.

The selection of the records to study was based on their date, title, body of issue and description in the archival records. The archival research is work in progress, so the following discussion represents preliminary findings. However, partial as it is, it constitutes progress towards the study of the history of collaborative translation practices and more specifically those through which theoretical Marxist texts were made available. As these texts have been translated in many languages, it is hoped that this paper will help stimulate more research in the history of their translations, and will extend our knowledge of the diverse and distinctive collaborations that made them possible.

## **2. Collaborative translation in historical studies and political texts**

Translation Studies scholars have noted the variety of contexts in which the term collaborative translation has been used and the consequent challenges in defining it (Neather 2020: 70; Cordingley and Frigau Manning 2016: 2-4). In this discussion, it will refer to a situation "when two or more agents cooperate in some way to produce a translation" (O'Brien 2011: 17). This wide-ranging definition allows for the involvement of at least one

translator and other contributors, such as revisers, editors, and proofreaders, as is the case in this study, and suggests that the absence of one of the contributors may jeopardize the completion of the translation. It is a useful definition because, as will be shown, each contributor executed a part or aspect of a translation without which the final version would not have been possible.

Although studies regarding historical accounts of collaboration are still limited, they provide a rich account of the various contexts of such practices. Perhaps one of the most eminent works in historical instances of collaborative translation is Bistué (2013). In her study of translation in medieval Europe, Bistué shows the importance of collaboration in the transmission of philosophical and scientific texts. She challenges the long-held beliefs which perceive the translated text as the exclusive creation of a single person with bilingual expertise (Bistué 2013: 2) and argues that despite these beliefs and claims, translation as a collaborative act was a well-established practice.

Other studies concern missionary and colonial settings. Hill (2013) and Hofmeyr (2004) have called attention to the complex positions that various contributors can occupy in the creation of translations. Colonial encounters were sites where collaborative practices emerged, but the power imbalances were such that the native person's position was often one of extreme subservience (Hill 2013: 34). Through historical examples of collaborative translation in the Chinese context, St. André (2010) discusses the process of the translation of sutras into Chinese over a period of ten centuries, which involved not only relay translation, but also discussion and revision among large groups of contributors (ibid.: 74). St. André argues for the value of historical research in translation groupwork and stresses its importance in translation education. Looking at more recent periods in film translation, Zanotti (2020) uses the term 'translaboration' to investigate the power imbalance in a dyadic collaboration between Stanley Kubrick and his translator in the 1980s. Using archival materials from the official Stanley Kubrick Archive, translation drafts and audio-material of phone conversations from the translator's estate, Zanotti shows how Kubrick intervened in the translation process to guide the translator's interpretation in ways that she describes as a more or less forced collaboration (Zanotti 2020: 222).

Finally, studies of collaboration specifically on political texts are few and tend to focus on contemporary settings. One of the earliest is by Koskinen (2008) who investigates translation practices in the European

Commission and the ways that collaboration shapes the translated text. Koskinen shows that in the final version it is the institution that ‘speaks’ through the translations (Koskinen 2008: 22) and the individual translator bears limited responsibility. Similarly concerned with the impact of collaboration on the lexical choices and construction of the TT are Fournel and Zancarini (2016) who describe their own collaboration during the translation of political texts from Italian to French. Following a historical and political analysis of the STs, and combining their different competences, the two translators describe how they arrived at their lexical choices (ibid.: 71) and refer to their collaborative model as “political philology”. It is a philology because they begin the translation process with a slow, careful reading of the originals, and political both because of the types of texts they translate, and because “approaching texts critically and reflecting on the meaning of the words has an eminently political value” (ibid.: 71). Their paper describes the application of theory into practice by close textual analysis and provides much-needed evidence of the impact of “translating together” on the wording and construction of translated texts (ibid.: 72). Having outlined previous studies of collaborative translation in historical studies and political texts, the discussion will move to the context of production of translations by the KKE followed by a detailed discussion of its model of collaboration.

### **3. The KKE and the translation of theoretical Marxist texts**

From the late 1920s onwards, Marxist ideas began to gain credence in Greece, causing a surge in the translation of theoretical Marxist literature (Elefantis 1976: 137f; Noutsos 1993: 372). For the KKE, which had closely aligned itself with the Marxism propagated in the USSR, its translation efforts intended to address two major priorities: firstly, to educate members in Marxist ideas and raise consciousness among the working class; secondly, to secure its domination over Marxist discourse and defeat its political opponents on the Marxist-oriented left in Greece. These political groups offered alternative interpretations of Marxism and had considerable influence within the Greek labor movement in the pre-war era. In its 1927 Congress, the party’s intention to control Marxist discourse was unambiguously stated (Delistathi 2023: 4): “our Party should aim at the monopoly of representation of the Marxist-Leninist theory” in order to

marginalize rival, ostensibly Marxist political forces (Rizospastis 1927: 1) (my translation).

Key to the success of the project of discourse domination was the codification of Marxism, which involved, on the one hand, the (re)translation of Marxist theory into Greek, and, on the other, establishing these official party (re)translations as the only correct interpretations of the original texts (Delistathi 2011: 208-209). This latter aspect was important because the party claimed that earlier translations published by its political rivals contained errors that they had deliberately inserted to manipulate Marxism for their own ends (Delistathi 2017: 208-209). Political events and the intense state persecution of communists throughout the 1930s and 1940s impeded but did not banish the translation of Marxist literature; even during the Axis occupation (1941-1944) there had been a handful of translated publications, e.g., *Dialectical and historical materialism* [Διαλεκτικός και Ιστορικός Υλισμός] (1942). But after liberation in 1944, when, briefly, conditions became less restrictive, there was once again a surge in translated Marxist texts: in 1945, their number soared to 40% of book production, dropping sharply to 7% the following year at the beginning of the civil war (Noutsos 1993: 372).

By the end of the Axis occupation, the KKE had become the dominant party of the Greek left and the influence of its pre-war rivals had diminished. Now it directed its criticism against the version of Marxism propagated by Tito in Yugoslavia and against those party members who espoused critical views of the regimes of the Eastern bloc. Having been defeated in the civil war, the KKE was made illegal in Greece and its members and supporters were persecuted. Tens of thousands crossed the borders and became political refugees dispersed in Eastern European countries; the party apparatus converged in Bucharest. Despite these difficulties, codifying Marxism in translations remained a priority and the stability provided in Bucharest gave this project a new impetus as evident from the output of the party's publishing activities: in 1951, translations accounted for 50.8% of its overall publication output (Mattheou and Polemi 2003: 64). In the pre-war era, the translation of theoretical texts in the KKE was usually undertaken by an individual (where translators' names are stated this seems to be the case). However, because the published translations were authorized by the party, it is certain that at least one other person would have checked and approved them on its behalf. In this respect, translating had always had a collaborative aspect in the KKE.

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This is the historical context of the Greek translation of the two volume *Selected works of Marx and Engels* [Μαρξ Εγγελς Διαλεχτά Έργα] which were published in 1951. The *Selected works* are one of several authorised party translations created through collaborative practices and the publication is an example where these practices are explicitly stated for the readers to see. Early in the first volume, there is a “Note by the Publishing House of the Central Committee of the KKE” informing the reader that this volume of the Greek edition mirrors that of the Russian edition as “edited by the Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute” in Moscow (1948) (Anon. 1951: n.p.) by including the same texts. The Institute was the ultimate interpreter of theoretical Marxist texts and published official translations and other authorized works by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Delistathi 2023: 3). The Note states:

The volume we submit today has been translated and revised by a team of translators, editors and partners. We carried out the translation directly from the original, the German or English text. We translated and revised Marx’s works, such as *The Civil War in France*, [and] *Wages, Price and Profit*, directly from the English original, considering also the corresponding editions in German and Russian language. (Anon. 1951: n.p.; my translation)

The Note makes the organization of the translation process and the different contributors visible. Readers are reassured that no relay translation and no unsupervised and unauthorized interpretations had been introduced, but it is unclear how editions in other languages had been considered. However, the practice of direct translation contrasts with the experience in Ukraine where the works of Marx and Engels were only allowed through relay translation from the authorized Russian versions (Kalnychenko and Kolomiyets 2022: 153). In any case, the Note makes clear how important it was for the party to document and explain the practices used for the creation of the publication and the following discussion will elaborate on how these were organized and actualized in this and other party publications.

#### 4. Industrialization of translation

In a study which specifically relates political priorities to the organization of translation work, Mossop (2006) addresses the effects of the Canadian government's 1995 state policy on translations. The new policy transformed translation from cultural activity into a business for profit (Mossop 2006: 18). This, in turn, ushered in changes in the organization of translating which left visible traces in translators' lexical choices. To account for these changes, Mossop (2006) uses the term "industrialization of translation" to mean not a transition from a pre-industrial to an industrial era, but a change in the perception of translation as business. Mossop borrows from Gouadec (2002: 237-254) several "indicators of industrialization" and identifies sixteen categories that stratify these changes in work organization and practice. They include: substantial quantities of material to be translated, standardization of work organization, division of labor, search for productivity gains, and appearance of quality management and salaried employees (Mossop 2006: 10-11).

In contrast to its use by Mossop (2006), the term industrialization usually denotes a period of major socio-economic transformation marked by the reorganization of production and labor practices, and an orientation towards mass production for a mass of consumers. It is associated with the rational division of labor and its subsequent further reorganization around the principles of the assembly and production line for increased productivity and profit. As will be shown in the following sections, the process of translating followed in the *Selected works* and other publications by the KKE shares many similarities with a production line (Delistathi 2023: 18), but also important differences. Whereas it is certainly the case that translating was reorganized collaboratively and hierarchically, that each contributor created an aspect of the translated text, and that productivity was key, it is also the case that scholarly publications like the *Selected works* were neither intended for a mass readership nor were they expected to make a profit in the monetary sense. Instead, the party would benefit from an increase in its cultural and political influence.

Nevertheless, the concept "industrialization of translation" provides useful directions which I will follow to systematize the analysis of collaborative practices. It foregrounds the fundamental changes in the ways in which translations were created within the KKE in the early 1950s in relation to the pre-war era, through a particular collaboration, a specific way of organizing work. Many of the categories in Mossop (2006) mentioned



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earlier are helpful here. To facilitate the discussion, I have reordered and modified them as follows: 1) large quantities of materials to be translated, 2) centralization of production, 3) intensification of work and productivity gains, 4) division of labor, and 5) quality control and employee discipline. In this last category, I have added the dimension of employee discipline because, as it will be discussed, discipline related to translation quality. Each of these categories will be analysed in the following sections.

#### 4.1. Large quantities of materials to be translated

A common association of the word “industrial” is with large-scale production; in the case of translation this encompasses both the volume of texts to be translated and the number of contributors involved (Mossop 2006: 14). Unlike pre-war times, the KKE now had a clearer and more consistent translation policy, with a distinct focus on the translation of the ‘classics’ (i.e., works by Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin) in scholarly, and often multi-volume publications of selected and collected works. The extent of the operation becomes clearer when we consider that the translations of the ‘classics’ in 1951 totalled 28.9% of all translations by the KKE, and in 1954 40% (Mattheou and Polemi 2003: 64). The scale and complexity of translating the ‘classics’ as well as the importance of their translations (cf. St. André 2010: 79) determined the size and range of operations and the scope of collaboration. An extensive number of dedicated and specialized contributors was required to undertake this task and a large scale and precise organization was needed to coordinate and supervise their activities. To facilitate this, the KKE set up the Department of Classics discussed below.

#### 4.2. Centralization of translation

An important element of industrialization is the centralization of production from small and dispersed sites to sizable units. By 1951, most party translation activity had coalesced into the Publishing House (1949-1954), formalizing the collaborative dimension of translation within the party. Based in a five-storey building in Bucharest,<sup>2</sup> its activities were supervised by the Committee for Enlightening (Mattheou and Polemi 2003: 56) and financed by the Labor Party of Romania, which collected all income generated by book sales (ibid.: 49). The Publishing House, which had its

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<sup>2</sup> See photograph in Patelakis (2019: 370).

own printshop, was divided into sections and included a Translation Section with its own sub-divisions, such as the Socio-political Department, the Literature Department and the Department of Classics (ASKI b.239, f.13/1/2),<sup>3</sup> so different contributors specialized in the translation of different text types. The Department of Classics was set up specifically for the translation of the ‘classics’ in scholarly editions. One of its earliest publications was the *Selected works of Marx and Engels* [Διαλεχτά Έργα Μαρξ Ένγκελς] (1951) as well as Lenin’s *Collected works* [‘Απαντα] (1952, volume III) and Stalin’s *Collected works* [‘Απαντα] (1953) among others. By bringing together different contributors in a single location, creating easy and clear lines of communication between them and enhancing coordination, centralization made possible the timely completion of the translations.

An effect of centralization was the appearance of salaried employees engaged expressly in translating theoretical Marxist texts. By 1954, the Department of Classics was employing 15 people, including Domna Christea, Petros Rousos, Leonidas Stringos and Panagiotis Mavromatis (ASKI b.286, f.13/48/131). However, it was not uncommon for personnel to move between departments according to needs and personal abilities. Although further information about Domna Christea is unclear, Rousos and Stringos were longstanding party members occupying various leading positions, as was Mavromatis until his expulsion from the KKE in 1950, although he continued to work in the Department and was translating directly from German (Georgiou 1992: 609-610). Overall, the appearance of salaried personnel with distinct responsibilities gave visibility and formal recognition to translators and other contributors and acknowledged them as specialized in the interpretation of Marxism (Delistathi 2023: 12).

Regarding the organization of daily work, little is known other than that it was eight hours long (ASKI b.293, f.13/55/25). Part of the workplace life was a “factory committee” which followed up “all relevant matters (production and norm, quality of work, discipline, order, cleanliness, moral commendations)” (ASKI b.294, f. 13/56/17). From 1950, there was a canteen for all employees, for printers as well as for those with text-writing responsibilities regardless of rank, which improved nutrition by providing meat four times a week (Mattheou and Polemi 2003: 47), although rationing was in place for basic foodstuff, clothes and shoes (Georgiou 1992: 609).

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<sup>3</sup> All references to archival material here include the location of the material at ASKI, followed by ‘b’ which denotes the box number where the documents are held, followed by ‘f’, denoting ‘file’. This is followed by the serial number of the document referred to as it is recorded in the archive.

Overcrowded housing, however, remained a pressing issue with fourteen rooms housing 61 employees (Mattheou and Polemi 2003: 47). In terms of their place in the Romanian society, employees were largely isolated from the local population, which was “unpleasant for all” (Georgiou 1992: 609) and nearly all aspects of their lives were planned, provided for and controlled by the party.

#### 4.3. Intensification of work and productivity gains

Similarly to the experience in other countries of Eastern Europe, such as Bulgaria (Ivleva 2022: 361), translation work was carefully planned in the party, but the introduction of production plans and targets for all employees of the Publishing House in 1950 accelerated its pace. What were initially collective and individual monthly and annual targets (ASKI b.294, f.13/56/17) soon also became daily (ASKI b.109, f.4/1/139), a change which further intensified work and added pressure on employees. This was also an indirect way of controlling and regulating employee behavior. Undoubtedly, production plans and targets were a fundamental feature of the economies of the Eastern European bloc and, given the KKE’s political affiliation, it is unsurprising that it adopted this approach to production. But they were also part of an overall effort to make productivity gains and enable industrialized production. The 1950 annual Report on the activities of the Publishing House commended employee performance which improved translation output, from 300 pages per week in March 1950, to 430 and then to 534 later in the year (ASKI b.294, f.13/56/17).

This pace of production depended on overtime, which was frequent and often unpaid: for example, in order to fulfil the 1951 production plan, employees worked 15,387 hours of overtime until 25 November 1951 and it was anticipated that by the end of the year there would be an additional 1,400 hours; of the overtime already worked, only 7,500 hours had been paid (ASKI b.294, f.13/56/67). Indeed, work was fast paced. Vassos Georgiou, Head of the Publishing House (1950-1951), noted that the *Selected works of Marx and Engels* were issued ahead of their deadline (Georgiou 1992: 618) and that staff “worked intensely because deadlines were tight from the start” (Georgiou 1992: 610). But these levels of intensification caused resentment and complaints were logged against Georgiou’s disproportionate demands (ibid.). Occasionally, though, it was accepted by the party that pressure was extreme. In 1953, it was acknowledged that in the Department of Classics “most of the revision work falls on [the

shoulders of] comrades Stringos and Mavromatis. The plan is too big for two” and a third person was needed, so the department “would be able to respond more comfortably and satisfactorily” to its assigned targets (ASKI b.239, f.13/1/6). Adherence to targets and deadlines was especially significant for the KKE: it confirmed not only the importance of the codification of the Marxist theory within the Greek context and the urgency of this task, but it also signalled the party’s continuous strength and achievement despite its defeat in the civil war. Regardless of its exile and persecution, the party could still mount an extensive and elaborate operation and sustain a dominant ideological presence within the Greek left. The intensification of translation work was accompanied by meticulous planning and a clear division of labor as discussed in the next section.

#### 4.4. Division of labor

Personnel records from the KKE's archive provide names, so we can discern the organization of the Department of Classics. Additionally, the production plan for 1955 cited in Mattheou and Polemi (2003: 65) has been used, which shows the names of contributors, responsibilities, number of pages to be worked on by each contributor and deadlines for the submission of work. All these documents have helped me reconstruct the timeline of the translation process and the workflow in the Department of Classics.

Industrialization is usually associated with the division of labor between supervised workers with distinct tasks, degrees of specialization and responsibilities. In the Department, production was hierarchically organized, with clear lines of managerial responsibility and division of labor. At the top of the hierarchy was the Head of Department, followed by revisers, sub-divided into reviser A and reviser B, and a person completing the last check of the final draft which was usually the Head. Reviser A worked on the first draft and had more extensive input than B who revised the second draft. Translators were also sub-divided into translator A and B, perhaps according to experience and/or competence. Other contributors to translation were typists and proofreaders (*αποδιαβαστές*) as well as those whose responsibilities and place in the timeline are not entirely clear, such as stylists (*στυλιστες*), contrasters (*παρὰβολή*), and correctors (*διορθωτές*). It seems that stylists were responsible for improving expression, particularly after so many different voices had been involved in creating the translated text, whereas correctors probably rectified typing errors (Delistathi 2023: 14-15). The contrasters’ responsibilities were described in a later document

in 1962 as those who compared the typed manuscripts with the handwritten ones, presumably checking that all corrections had been incorporated (ASKI b.250, f.13/12/310).

Decisions about the translation process were made at the top of the hierarchy and were issued down the chain of command; the workflow was as follows: each ST was divided into parts (perhaps by the Head);<sup>4</sup> these were assigned to individual contributors, initiating the translation process. Translators would complete a first draft, which would be sent to a typist and then to Reviser A, who would comment and propose changes. A second draft would be prepared and typed (and perhaps checked by a contraster) and forwarded to Reviser B for more comments and changes. A third and final draft would be prepared and sent to the stylist and proofreader and then to the Head or other approved official for the final check and authorization to print (Delistathi 2023: 17-18). It is unclear, however, whether revisers contrasted the Greek translation with the original German or English text (for the works of Marx and Engels) or with their Russian translations.

Regarding the dynamics of interactions between contributors, translators could exercise their judgment on lexical choices, however, the extent of this was bound by what was institutionally allowed (see next section). They bore responsibility for their choices, but revisers were empowered to challenge and reverse them; the Head, as the person who authorized a translation on behalf of the institution, could veto everyone else's decisions; thus, contributors found themselves in a web of power relations and a cline from less to more powerful.

The 1955 production plan shows the timeline of the translation process including clear and identical stages which were followed across different publications, so for the translation of theoretical Marxist texts the translation process was standardized. As indicated by the deadlines for each task in the same plan, revision was happening as translation was progressing and revisers would not wait for the whole draft of the translation to be completed first. This meant that production could keep moving towards the realization of the plan, making a more rational and productive use of labor and ensuring a faster turnover. It is clear from the structure of the workflow that every contributor specialized in an aspect of the translation process, from creating the first draft of the translation to improving its accuracy and fluency in later drafts. The collaborative translation process, during which

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<sup>4</sup> A similar process described in Mossop (2006, p. 24) as “chunking”.

contributors constructed different parts of the translation and performed different textual processes to prepare the text for the next stage of production, can be likened to a production line where each contributor adds a component or applies a process to the product which then moves to the next workstation. In this way, no single contributor is visible or solely responsible for the end product, but all have added their expertise for its construction.

#### 4.5. Quality control and employee discipline

Central to the codification of Marxism was the production of translations which would be accepted as accurate interpretations of their originals, so quality control, another aspect of industrial production, was key. Speaking on behalf of the party, Petros Rousos, second secretary of the Committee for Enlightening (the supervisory body of the Publishing House) who authorized translations, opined on the best method to translate theoretical Marxist texts that party translators should follow: neither word-for-word, as it would “kill the text” by not making it fully comprehensible to the reader, nor a free translation which “shows irresponsibility”; translators should, instead, opt for “greater adherence to the original” while preserving the author’s style in a fluent expression (Rousos 1953: 79-80; my translation). The party stated the characteristics of a good quality translation: both word-for-word and free translation were considered unreliable.<sup>5</sup> Instead, a good translation should be accurate, but also fluent and reproducing the authorial style. With its various levels of scrutiny, correction and supervision, the party’s collaborative model was the appropriate way to organize translation work in order to create such translations. On the one hand, quality control helped to eliminate translation errors as the party saw them; on the other hand, it also increased the party’s control over the translation process and the actions of its own members.

The translated text became the product of a production line with many contributors and processes. As it was checked and modified by different people, moving across various phases of inspection and correction, its reliability and trustworthiness increased, gradually becoming more suitable for authorization and endorsement by the institution. The personal, subjective interpretations of individual contributors were eliminated by the impersonal and seemingly objective, and thus correct,

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<sup>5</sup> In the context of literary translation in the GDR free translation was also discouraged as “a falsification of the original text” (Blum 2022: 302).

interpretation of the team (Delistathi 2023: 18). In other words, collaboration was not only a mode of work organisation, but also a process of achieving (assumed) objectivity. The Note in the *Selected work of Marx and Engels* announcing the collaborative translation practices mentioned earlier declared the rigorous processes followed to assert the supposed accuracy of the translations.

Did the overall quality of translations improve because of collaboration? Georgiou was sceptical of the venture to translate the ‘classics’ and of their overall quality: “I don’t know what the outcome of this endeavour was after all and what its quality was” (Georgiou 1992: 610). In 1951, the politburo noted that the party’s translations had “serious deficiencies” (Mattheou and Polemi 2003: 52). Issues identified concerned expression and the “quality of revision”, but accuracy was not specifically mentioned. For the party, these problems were rooted, on the one hand, in insufficient knowledge of publishing practices and on the other, in “inadequate ideological party work” (ibid.: 52).

Overall, the industrialization of translation enabled the party to keep firmer control not only of the translation process and the translated text, but also of its own members. If production plans were a means for the intensification of production and the indirect control of employee actions, there were also specific supervisory mechanisms for their discipline. A “Regulation of internal order” (1953) with the specific purpose of “organizing discipline” to “ensure compliance with socialist discipline at work, increase in productivity at work and production of good quality products, [and] realization and transcendence of [production] plans with reduction in production costs” (ASKI b.295, f.13/57/73) was intended, on the one hand, to prevent employees from disrupting or undermining production, and on the other, to ensure that they carried out their duties in institutionally defined ways. Regarding translation, the Regulation defined a “defective product” to be “a bad translation which required double the normal time for revision, a reprint due to errors in translation or revision” (ASKI b.295, f.13/57/73). Increase in productivity was key and employees were expected to complete the assigned tasks within and even before the deadline. Detecting undesirable behaviour was central: the need for more than the allocated revision time delayed production and signalled underperformance by a translator, while a reprint would be a more serious matter as it wasted both time and printing resources. A five-tier system of disciplinary measures was put in place to ensure conformity, ranging from reprimand to dismissal. As in the experience of Eastern Europe (see Rundle

*et al.* 2022), so here, translation was carefully guarded, a politically important and ideologically sensitive enterprise as well as an output of industrial production subject to scrutiny and to the monitoring and discipline of its creators.

## 5. Conclusion

Central to the KKE's project to dominate Marxist discourse was to codify Marxist theory through good quality translations as the party saw them. From this point of departure, this paper investigated ways in which collaborative translation practices were operationalized to create institutional translations of Marxist theoretical texts. It showed the relationship between political priorities and social structures and argued that to advance codification, a specific model of collaboration was developed based on the principles of industrial production, referred to as "industrialisation of translation". This model was critical to the successful completion of the translations, but did not necessarily bring the desired quality. The term "industrialisation" encapsulates different characteristics of the organisation of the collaborative translation practices, commonly associated with industrial production. The volume of material to be translated was significant enough to require standardised translation processes and repeatable stages, and the involvement of multiple contributors with different specialisations and levels of expertise, such as translators and revisers. In the hierarchically structured Department of Classics, where operations were centralized, contributors occupied distinct places in a web of power relations and accountabilities. Collaboration was organized as a production line where supervised contributors added parts and performed processes until the translated text was completed and authorized for publication. Production plans, which intensified work and tightened the party's control over its employees, ensured productivity gains were made, and specific mechanisms of discipline were put in place to ensure compliance with institutional demands. The rational division of labour was essential both to guarantee that production targets were met and to introduce different levels of quality control throughout the translation process.

Indeed, producing translations that would be accepted as accurate was part of the success of the project of discourse domination, so clear pronouncements were made on what constituted a good translation and the



best method to translate. In the example of the *Selected works of Marx and Engels*, collaborative work practices were brought to the reader's attention. With their various layers of checks and corrections, collaborative practices suggested processes of text-creation through which individual and subjective interpretative positions were erased, promoting instead the assumed objectivity of the group (Delistathi 2023: 18). Collaborative translation practices functioned both as a means of controlling translation and as a means of evoking the accuracy and objectivity of translations in the service of discourse control. Considering collaborative practices as part of an industrialized model of translation production illuminates new aspects of past practices in translation and the varieties of contexts and models in which these practices were implemented.

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