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Translation and Fascism

Christopher Rundle

Introduction

In this chapter I shall compare the history of translation in four twentieth century 'fascist' regimes: Mussolini's Italy (1921-1943), Hitler's Germany (1933-1945), Franco's Spain (1939-1975) and Salazar's Portugal (1926-1974) (henceforth I shall refer to each of these regimes simply with the name of the country).¹ What I aim to show is that there is a direct correlation between the extent to which these regimes were genuinely fascist and the degree of hostility towards translation. I also want to consider how the level of hostility shown towards the translations was linked to the adoption of anti-Semitic policies.

I am of the opinion that research on translation has a significant contribution to make to our understanding of any historical context where the politics of culture become bound up with the politics of nationalism. Any nationalist enterprise has to define its relationship with the foreign, a process in which culture plays a fundamental role. And to the extent to which this will also involve the acceptance or rejection of cultural exchange, translation will inevitably become significant. As we shall see, in those

¹ I would like to thank Anabela Ferreira, Teresa Seruya, Kate Sturge and Jeroen Vandaele for their very valuable feedback during the writing of this chapter.

regimes where cultural exchange was viewed with suspicion or hostility, translation became an issue that extended well beyond the cultural sphere into the realm of politics and government policy. Where cultural exchange was viewed in more relaxed fashion, or even encouraged, translation did not become a political issue to the same extent and was simply subjected to the same policies as domestic cultural products. In historical contexts such as these, then, translation can provide a fascinating perspective which throws into relief the way in which a society or a regime defines its own identity with respect to others.

To simplify what is already a fairly complex historical comparison I shall focus on book translation in this chapter. This undoubtedly leaves out some important parts of the story, especially the translation of film and theatre. However, there is a sense in which these regimes' treatment of translated books is more revealing of their attitude towards the foreign than their treatment of theatre and film. Because film and theatre were always considered a form of mass entertainment, all four regimes monitored and censored them much more closely than books, regardless of whether they were translations or not. As Vandaele notes in reference to Spain:

[...] the regime's fear was greater for film than for performed theatre (see, e.g., Vandaele [2015]), it was greater for modern literature than for the classics (see, e.g., Bandín Fuertes 2007), it was greater for performed theatre than it was for written theatre (Merino Álvarez 1994: 60), and it was probably greater for prose than for poetry. (Vandaele 2010: 89-90)

The very thorough surveillance applied by all four regimes to mass forms of entertainment makes it more difficult to detect whether or not a regime was adopting a specific policy for translations – given that all products were censored regardless of their origin. With books, on the other hand, the level of censorship and surveillance was less consistently thorough and the differences between the regimes are more significant and revealing, allowing us in some cases to detect specific policies towards translation.

I should stress that the comparison that follows will not be evenly distributed across the four regimes. This is a reflection of the research available and also of the very different temporal extensions of the Spanish and Portuguese regimes compared to Italy and Germany. While the latter, at least where translation is concerned, are both largely defined by what took place in the 1930s and early 1940s, the history of translation in the former extends over a much longer period during which the external (international) context evolved and changed considerably. Spain went from being an ally of the Axis during the war and pariah state in the eyes of the Allies immediately afterwards; to anti-communist ally of the West during the cold war. Portugal went from being a suspect para-fascist state in the eyes of the Western democracies before the war; to a quiet ally during the war; to founding member of Nato after the war. In practice what this means is that most of the research on translation in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany concerns the interwar years and the period of WWII; while most of the research on Franco's Spain and Salazar's Portugal concerns the post-WWII period. In reflection of this there is a broader comparison that underlies the more detailed

examination of each regime that follows; that between pre-war fascist and post-war para-fascist regimes and their cultural policies.

The nature of fascism

One of the purposes of this chapter is to see how the political and ideological differences between the regimes are reflected in their attitudes towards translation and whether these attitudes shed light on the nature of their fascism.

Fascism studies is a rich and complex disciplinary area comprising historians, political scientists and historical sociologists. It is safe to say that despite continued debate since the end of WWII there is no real consensus on what constitutes fascism and which states or regimes can legitimately be described as fascist. However, within this wealth of scholarship there is a comparative approach which is commonly labelled 'generic fascism', where a number of scholars have sought to arrive at the definition of a 'fascist minimum' (cf. Eatwell 1996b) that will be able to separate regimes that are genuinely fascist from other forms of right-wing authoritarianism. There was a first group which appeared in the 1960-70s, including scholars such as Juan José Linz, George L. Mosse, and Ernst Nolte. These were followed in the 1990s by a second round of scholars comprising Roger Griffin (1993), Roger Eatwell (1996a), Stanley Payne (1995) and Robert Paxton (1998), as well as scholars such as Antonio Costa Pinto (1995), Aristotle Kallis (Costa Pinto and Kallis 2014) and Stein Uglevik Larsen (Costa Pinto, Eatwell and Larsen 2007). The reflection that follows is broadly based on my reading of their work.

The first useful distinction to make is between the two fully realised fascist regimes of Italy and Germany and the 'para-fascist' regimes of Spain and Portugal. This is a term which was popularized by Roger Griffin (2014) to describe those authoritarian regimes which did not come to power by means of an 'extra-systemic' revolutionary movement but as an attempt by the ruling elites and their military representatives to restore stability and strong government in a way that did not threaten the basis of the existing class structure or of traditional values. (Griffin 1993: 121)

In other words, even when these regimes resembled fascist movements they were actually anti-fascist in purpose:

A para-fascist regime, however ritualistic its style of politics, well orchestrated its leader cult, palingenetic its rhetoric, ruthless its terror apparatus, fearsome its official paramilitary league, dynamic its youth organization or monolithic its state party, will react to genuine fascism as a threat, and though it may be forced to seek a fascist movement's cooperation to secure populist support or ward off common enemies (notably revolutionary socialism), such a regime will take the first opportunity to neutralize it. (Griffin 1993: 121-122)

With reference to Spain and Portugal this distinction becomes even clearer in the post-war period which is the one we shall be focusing on when looking at translation. As a consequence of the defeat of the Axis, fascism was thoroughly discredited as an ideology after the war. It was natural therefore for states like Spain and Portugal to

want to distance themselves as far as possible from the taint of being fascist, even when retaining ex-fascists within their fold.

Another useful means of distinguishing between these four regimes is in terms of the long and detailed analysis made by Stanley Payne (1995) of interwar fascism. He suggests a useful matrix which includes three variants of authoritarian nationalism that all co-existed in these countries: the fascists, the radical right and the conservative right (Payne 1995: 14–15). In each country the balance between these forces was different, accounting for the different nature of the regimes that were established there.

Broadly speaking, we can see that the Italian and German regimes were direct expressions of their fascist parties (the National Fascist Party in Italy and the National Socialists in Germany). Whatever the complex dynamics of the relationship between Mussolini and Hitler and their respective parties, the party played a fundamental role in the construction of the regime and its identity. In Spain and Portugal, on the other hand, neither dictator emerged from the existing fascist parties (the Falange in Spain and the National Syndicalists in Portugal) but were, instead, both representatives of the conservative right. And although they adopted some of the external trappings of fascism (in imitation of Italy mostly) and co-opted members of the fascist parties into the regime, one of their main aims was actually to avoid a fascist revolution and to impose a reactionary conservative dispensation that was strongly Catholic in inspiration.

Another important distinction lies in the role played by the military. Neither Mussolini nor Hitler used the army to gain or maintain power. They relied on mass mobilization and the broadly transversal appeal of their party to win power via democratic elections, and were then able to put a dictatorship in place. Franco and Salazar, on the other hand, were both dictators who rose to power with the support of the army. Their relationship with the army was very different – Franco was a prominent General while Salazar was an academic economist – and would evolve very differently over the long years that these dictators stayed in power, but they were both effectively at the head of military regimes.

What, then, are the implications of these differences for our examination of translation? The key lies in the fact that both Mussolini and Hitler wished to bring about a revolution and a profound renewal of the nation—what Griffin (1993) has famously termed a 'palingenesis'—while both Franco and Salazar sought the opposite. In Italy and Germany, therefore, a complex process of attempted cultural redefinition created a hostile ideological climate for translations; one where suspicion of the foreign became bound up with a perceived threat to the status and prestige of the nation. In Spain and Portugal, on the other hand, cultural innovation was actively kept in check by very tight control on the part of the regime; a situation in which cultural exchange via translation did not acquire the ideological significance it acquired in Italy and Germany and was generally not perceived as a threat.

Popular fiction

One of the things to emerge very clearly from existing research on translation under fascism is that whenever translations were received with hostility and suspicion this was largely due to the impact of popular fiction. Foreign bestsellers, especially from the US and the UK, provoked profound changes in book publishing, enabling the more enterprising houses to grow on an industrial scale but also threatening the livelihood of those houses that operated on a more artisan scale for an elitist niche market.

It is also clear that while this hostility is very evident in the sources on pre-war Italy and Germany, it is present only to a lesser degree in those from post-war Portugal, and in Spanish sources there is virtually no sign of such hostility. This reflects the significant differences between the pre- and post-WWII contexts: different attitudes towards Anglo-American popular culture; different stages in the evolution of their respective publishing industries; and different levels of cultural nationalism.

Italy and Germany

There is no doubt that in both Italy and Germany translations became identified with the boom in popular fiction that took place from the late 1920s onwards. This 'flood' or 'invasion' of translations – as commentators of the day put it – posed a number of problems, which were complex and provoked contradictory reactions. But in both countries popular fiction, and especially crime fiction, became the focus of the hostility towards translation that was felt in many quarters.

In Germany the boom in translated popular fiction arguably began in 1927 during the Weimar era when the enterprising Munich publisher, Wilhelm Goldmann, launched a

series based initially on the novels of Edgar Wallace which sparked a 'craze' for crime fiction:

Goldmann used series-based marketing, massive advertising campaigns and tie-ins to help make Wallace very likely the most-sold author translated from English in the late 1920s. (Sturge 2010: 78)

In Italy the start of the translation boom of the 1930s can also be traced to the launch of a crime series, one which also rode the world-wide success of Edgar Wallace. In 1929 the publisher Arnoldo Mondadori first launched the crime series *I libri gialli* [the yellow books], so called because of the series' iconic yellow covers that mimicked the aesthetic of American pulp magazine covers and adopted the colour which would become associated with crime fiction in many countries (cf. Hodder & Stoughton's 'Yellow jackets' launched in 1926 in the UK, and the French 'Le Masque' series launched in 1925 that were bound in yellow beneath their illustrated dust jackets). Like Goldmann's novels, Mondadori's *Gialli* were sold in magazine format at a very low price and they enjoyed an instant success of staggering proportions by the standards of the Italian market. Naturally, other Italian publishers soon woke up to the potential of the translation market and a whole range of series were launched onto the market that were based on translated novels, both popular as well as more high-brow quality fiction (Billiani 2007: 90-93; Rundle 2010: 78-79).

The impact of these novels, especially the number of copies they would sell, provoked hostility and heated debate. In Italy there were essentially two strands to the debate. The first consisted of a discussion within the literary establishment about the impact

that translations were having on the standards of the Italian book market. The general perception was that translations were spoiling the market with an 'invasion' of low quality literature that was poorly translated into weak Italian. The worry was that the reading public was being turned away from quality domestic writers by the aesthetically and morally suspect appeal of translated popular fiction:

For years the Italian book market has been saturated with translations. The majority of these are well and truly an insult to Italian translation and to the Italian language. The more popular the edition, and therefore accessible to the wider public at a low cost, the greater the carelessness. It is pointless to name these publishers, they are too well known. (From a letter published in *Il Torchio*, n. 33, September 1928: 3; reproduced in Sfondrini 1997: 264-265. All translations from the Italian are my own).

However, this defensive reaction on the part of the literary establishment did not provoke any reaction or sympathy on the part of the regime.

The second strand, on the other hand, acquired much greater political significance. This was the debate provoked by newly available translation statistics, published by the *Index Translationum*, that showed that Italy published more translations than any other country in the world. This was bad enough, but it became clear that Italy was also strikingly unsuccessful in exporting its own literature in the form of translations from Italian: the 'translation trade balance', as it was called, was consistently negative (Rundle 2010: 55–59). Such a passive and unfascist receptiveness became a political embarrassment and was not fitting for a country that should be, in the words of the

Minister for Popular Culture Alessandro Pavolini, 'conscious of her own eternal role as disseminator rather than receiver' (Rundle 2010: 183). The translation deficit gave the lie to Fascist ambitions of cultural expansion which were supposed to match the regime's colonial ambitions.

The Publishers Federation became the target of some very aggressive criticism on the part of the Authors and Writers Union, led by the Futurist poet F. T. Marinetti.

Exploiting the campaign for autarky – Italy's response to the economic sanctions imposed on it by the League of Nations following its invasion of Ethiopia in 1935 – the Authors and Writers Union argued that a 'cultural autarky' should also be introduced and they proposed a series of institutional barriers that were intended to stem the flow of translations. They wanted a Translators Register established, they wanted a ministerial Translations Commission to be formed, and they wanted to see a principle of reciprocity applied to the translation market (Rundle 2010, ch.4; Rundle forthcoming).

In Germany there was also much discussion of the same statistics on translation, which were clearly seen as an indication of the cultural prestige of the nation and the degree of influence that it exerted internationally. Germany published nearly as many translations as Italy did in this period but was also much more successful in exporting books in the form of translations from German. Germany's positive translation trade balance was looked upon with admiration by the Italians (Rundle 2010: 55–57).

However, many of these translated German works were by authors that Nazi commentators considered to be unsuitable. They complained that foreign readers

seemed to prefer the works of anti-Nazi, or officially unacceptable (Jewish) German authors, to the those of the 'new German' writers the regime wanted to see promoted (Rubino 2010; Sturge 2010: 70).

Faced with this situation, there were calls for greater control over the translation market in terms which were very similar to those of the Authors and Writers Union in Italy, such as this example from the journal *Die Neue Literatur* [The New Literature]:

One of the most important tasks for the Reich Chamber of Writers seems to me to be a kind of intellectual planned economy towards and in agreement with other countries, a kind of foreign exchange control which would prevent other nations sealing themselves off from Germany while we still continue to take in their literature. (Vesper 1935 cited in Sturge 2010: 70)

The similarity with Italy continues with demands for a system of reciprocity:

[...] in summer 1939 the official organ of the works librarians, *Die Werkbücherei*, cites in some detail the publication statistics for translation into and out of German as a reason to demand 'that foreign writing in German translation must only be deployed in the same measure to which German writing in foreign translation is taken up and properly appreciated abroad'. (Sturge 2010: 70)

In Germany as in Italy, there was also much hostility towards popular fiction, especially crime fiction. The gatekeepers, such as the Reich Chamber of Writers, the librarians' and teachers' associations, and parts of the Nazi party, especially the ideologue Alfred Rosenberg, disapproved of crime fiction as morally suspect and

anyway a residue of the Weimar era, rooted in its cosmopolitan, urban, and decadent cultural environment – all ills which came to be identified as Jewish. They all argued for strict quality restrictions to be imposed. As Sturge explains, the fear was that, in the words of Hanns Johst, the president of the Reich Chamber of Writers,

the public's interest in translated fiction might even be interpreted as a 'flight from the programme of National Socialism'. (Sturge 2010: 51)

As Sturge (2004: 204) points out, crime novels were usually set in contemporary urban environments, they made no reference to nationalist values and the social environment tended to be portrayed in terms of class rather than in terms of the *Volk*. In all these respects, therefore, they went against the values the Nazis promoted of a healthy, natural life working on the land; and of a racially pure identification with the *Volk*. And with some adjustments, a similar thing could be said of the relationship between crime fiction and typical Fascist values in Italy: where crime novels represented an unhealthy, urban fascination with social deviance that was in contrast with the patriotic and family values the regime tried to promote.

In both countries, then, popular fiction was seen as a problem. But there was no denying the commercial success of these novels. It was not in the interests of either regime to kill off a successful industry:

[...] the complete removal of so commercially important a segment of the publishing industry would have been damaging for an economy that, despite its anti-capitalist rhetoric, depended on a capitalist market of sorts. (Sturge 2010: 79, referring to Geyer-Ryan 1987: 184)

In Italy the destabilizing effect that the success of these novels had on the literary establishment also coincided with the more iconoclastic strand of Fascist ideology that was happy to see the intellectual elite forced out of its ivory tower (Rundle forthcoming). The industrialization of publishing was also a process that fit well with the regime's modernizing narrative. Furthermore, the regime looked upon the Publishers Federation as a loyal group and was loathe to inflict unnecessary economic damage on them.

In Germany too, there was a minority within the regime that viewed popular novels in a less dramatic light as an acceptable form of light entertainment and even encouraged them. Above all, Joseph Goebbels, the Nazi Minister of Propaganda, was a firm believer in the benefits of the cultural escapism that these novels and other forms of popular culture provided. They were cheap to produce and served as a pragmatic 'safety valve' in what was otherwise a highly regulated cultural economy (Barbian 1995: 720, cited by Sturge 2010: 79).

Spain

Current research suggests that in Spain the level of debate on translations was significantly lower. Although still open to similar criticisms such as those levelled at crime fiction in Italy and Germany, of being contrary to the spirit of the regime and of being the vehicle of unhealthy and corrupting values, these attitudes towards translated fiction were not shared by all and do not appear to have been dominant. This is a reflection of the fact that in Spain there was a constant vying between those with a more fascist ideological outlook and those who were conservative Catholics. In

addition to this opposition is the fact that the fascist elements of the regime went from being fairly strong and influential before and during the war, to losing much of their influence afterwards and therefore adopting a stance of internal opposition which could lead to an open-mindedness that would have been surprising in the 1930s and 1940s but which made political sense in the 1960s. In fact, the vaguely paradoxical situation developed in Spain where the Falangists became a disruptive innovative presence that sometimes sought to open up the regime and mitigate its repressive cultural climate (cf. Vandaele 2010: 113).

Merino and Rabadán make it clear that in Spain, far from being a prime target for censorship, popular novels were 'the type of ideologically clean texts favoured by censorship boards' (Merino and Rabadán 2002: 137). In other words, easily accessible literature that was intended for pure entertainment could be relied upon not to provide any kind of ideological challenge to the regime, while the Censorship board's thorough monitoring ensured that no immoral material was released onto the market. Camus (2008: 160) suggests a different, and as far as I know unique, interpretation and believes that the Franco regime viewed translated novels as a serious threat and actually 'adopted control measures to put a brake on the importation and subsequent translation of foreign books'. But she provides no evidence to support this statement. The fact that there was apparently no real debate about translations in Spain would seem to imply that the wave of translated fiction did not cause the same sort of upset as in Italy and Germany in the 1930s. A confirmation of this is provided by the striking success of pseudotranslations. These were books written in Spanish by Spanish

authors who used foreign pseudonyms so as to give the impression that the novel was actually a translation. These were usually Westerns or crime novels and the pseudonyms were mostly intended to look British or American. Camus (2008: 50–51) has studied the censorship files of a sample of 730 Westerns published in Spain. Of these

- 49 were by American authors
- 31 were by Spanish authors writing under their real name
- 111 were by Spanish authors writing under a pseudonym. These include authors with multiple pseudonyms and multiple authors using the same pseudonym.

As Rabadán and Merino explain these pseudotranslations offered both writers and publishers a number of advantages:

It made sense for publishing houses to pay a native Spanish writer to produce these popular stories for two basic reasons: first, they could easily censor their own writing thus ensuring that what was submitted to the censorship board would be authorized; second, it was cheaper and the room to manoeuvre was greater. (Merino and Rabadán 2002: 142)

As Vandaele has suggested (private communication), an openness to translations and pseudotranslations were an effective way for the Franco regime to maintain an illusion of normality.

The question of pseudotranslations is an interesting one because while these were a significant publishing phenomenon in Germany, Spain and Portugal, reflecting the fact that translations enjoyed such a high status that the very fact of being a translation

was a selling point, in Italy there does not appear to have been a similar phenomenon. Despite the readership's undoubted enthusiasm for translated novels, such was the aggressiveness of the campaign against translations that Italian publishers regularly tried to play down the number of translations they were publishing. Moving away from books, however, there is recent evidence of pseudotranslations having been published in popular women's magazines in the early to mid-1930s, such as *Novella* and *Lei*, both published in Milan by Rizzoli (Guidali 2017).

It seems to be a feature of all four of these regimes that, although they disapproved of it, they were not able to effectively contrast the growing popularity of popular culture - be this in literature, film, or the periodical press. As Sturge (2004: 203-204) suggests, translated popular fiction was part of what Schäfer (1981: 7) called the 'politics-free sphere' in which a comforting sense of normality was fed by consumerism and the provision of easily accessible light entertainment. We might hypothesize, then, that in the somewhat stultifying cultural circumstances that applied to varying degrees in all four regimes, translation was not exactly the opium of the people, but it did perhaps function as a kind of cultural opiate that allowed people a certain (politically harmless) imaginative freedom in a context in which personal freedoms were being challenged. However, Sturge (2004: 204) cautions against taking this idea too far and underlines the practical difficulties of trying to control the book market and the opportunities these difficulties provided for the introduction of literature that these regimes did not necessarily approve of.

Portugal

In Portugal the situation appears to have been similar to that in Spain, although there was perhaps more resistance to translated popular fiction, mostly because of its impact on the publishing industry. Here too, crime fiction was the dominant genre, mostly translated from English and there was also a significant number of pseudotranslations published (Seruya 2010: 125–129). There were complaints by publishers and booksellers that Portuguese writers were not producing enough quality literature (Seruya 2010: 122). Salazar himself took an interest in the arts and was disappointed by Portugal's inability to produce works that were worthy of note:

I much regret that Portugal is at present so poor in the field of arts. I am pleased with the progress achieved by our sculptors and people in the decorative arts, but I have to admit that nowadays we don't have famous painters or architects who have won converts, and both the theatre and the literary production have been unable to enlarge their horizons. (Garnier 1952: 191, cited by Seruya 2010: 122)

There were also conflicting views in Portugal on the benefits of translation. On the one hand there were the writers and critics who 'regarded translation as a means of internationalizing Portuguese literary life and taste' (Seruya 2010: 122) – a view that was also held in Italy by some writers and intellectuals in Italy (Rundle 2010: 139–142). On the other hand, there was also talk of an 'epidemic of translations', with an alarmist rhetoric that was very similar to that used in Italy and Germany:

Epidemia de traduções (epidemic of translations) was the title of an article in the monthly *Ocidente* denouncing the 'denationalizing impulse' ['ímpetos desnacionalizadores'] and the 'mental laziness' ['preguiça mental'] revealed by the increasing volume of translations. (Seruya 2010: 122)

The upshot was that the Publishers and Booksellers Association drafted a 'translation statute'. However this was not intended to block translations or even limit their numbers; it was intended to regulate the translation market in line with the corporatist economic doctrines of the state. For example, a system was put in place – covering books that were out of copyright – to avoid a situation where two translations of the same book could be published simultaneously, thereby protecting publishers from damaging competition. (Seruya 2010: 122–123)

Seruya reports that twenty years later, in the 1960s, there was a new round of complaints in the press about translations; complaints that are remarkably similar to those expressed in Italy in the 1930s. First they complained that the translations were of a poor quality and written in bad Portuguese. Secondly they lamented the excessive enthusiasm shown by Portuguese readers for popular literature which was so lacking in literary quality as to be a danger to them: 'small, cheap books [...] so badly written, lacking imagination and all artistic prudence [...] that they are a permanent danger' (Silva 1967: 15, cited by Seruya 2010: 123).

As we shall see, however, this hostility did not produce specific restrictions on translations. Quite the contrary: like Spain, Portugal subjected translation to the same censorship criteria as applied to domestic literature.

Censorship

We have seen the ways in which translation became an issue in these regimes, both because of the impact that translated popular fiction was having on the publishing industry and, in some cases, because of the ideological threat that they came to represent. The question, then, is what steps if any did they take to control or restrict translations. When looking at the censorship policies of these regimes, it is important to make a clear distinction between general policies that also affected translations but were not aimed at them, and policies that targeted translations specifically.

From this perspective, what is significant is not so much the individual details of the censorship, the mechanisms used and values it upheld, which are, on the whole, fairly predictable; what is significant is the fact that the two apparently more totalitarian regimes of Italy and Germany actually maintained a much more permeable system than that applied by the less fascist but much more reactionary Spain. On the other hand, Italy and Germany, while maintaining a less systematic censorship of books, also introduced specific regulations concerning translations; something which neither Spain nor Portugal appear to have done.

Italy

The official line in Italy was that there was no preventive censorship applied to books. Technically speaking this was true in that publishers had to seek permission to *distribute* books rather than to publish (print) them (Rundle 2010: 22). When the censor did intervene it tended to be after the fact and could result in a whole print run being impounded, the distribution of a book being blocked or, in some less serious

cases, the publisher simply being told that no further reprints should be produced.

(Rundle 2010: 22-23, 94 n.43).

In 1934 however an unofficial system of preventive censorship of books was introduced, albeit a fairly superficial one that certainly did not involve a detailed and systematic checking of the texts. The new system was imposed by Mussolini after he became incensed by the cover of the novel *Sambadù amore negro* by Mura (real name Maria Volpi) which portrayed an elegantly dressed black man embracing a swooning white woman; an image which he found particularly offensive in the build up to the Italian invasion of Ethiopia. In order to ensure that such a mistake could not be made again the new system made it obligatory for publishers to send three copies of each new publication to the local prefecture before it was sold or distributed (Fabre 1998: 22-28; Rundle 2010: 21-22).

However, despite the campaigns in the press against translations and the calls for a cultural autarky described above, the regime did not institute any specific restrictive measures against translation until quite late. Things began to change in 1938, the year in which Italy officially introduced anti-Semitic legislation. First, in March 1938, the state censor, the Ministry for Popular Culture, made it obligatory for publishers to seek prior authorization for their translations. Purely scientific publications and universally recognized classics were excluded from this provision, confirming that it was translated novels, especially popular novels, that the regime was really concerned about (Rundle 2010: 147-149).

Then, in September 1938, the Ministry created the notorious Commission for the Purging of Books [*Commissione per la bonifica libraria*]. Although it would go on to devote all of its energies to a thorough purge of Jewish authors, the commission's initial brief was also to examine the situation concerning translations. As the Minister for Popular Culture, Dino Alfieri, explained in a note to Mussolini the day before the first meeting of the commission:

[The commission's aim is] to establish precise criteria and determine the most suitable and efficient methods to achieve a complete review of Italian book production and that of foreign books translated into Italian. This review has become all the more necessary in view of the racial directions from above (Rundle 2010: 171).

In fact, the commission devoted itself almost exclusively to drawing up a blacklist of approximately 900 'undesirable' authors, most of which were Jewish (Fabre 1998; Fabre 2007).

It was only when the work of the commission was practically complete, late in 1940, that the new Minister for Popular Culture, Alessandro Pavolini, announced that he intended to apply a quota system to book translations with a maximum limit of 10% of the production of each publishing house. The publishers naturally tried to fend off such a drastic measure and eventually succeeded in agreeing on a quota of 25% which came into force in January 1942 (Rundle 2010: 184–188, 194–197). A few months later, in April 1942, the Ministry banned all crime fiction, ostensibly because of paper shortages caused by the war. Although this was not technically an anti-translation

measure, there is no doubt that crime novels had come to represent all that was unacceptable about translations and were widely seen as an Anglo-American import (Rundle 2010: 190–193).

Germany

In Nazi Germany there was no systematic preventive censorship of books until wartime paper rationing was introduced. Instead the regime relied on the constant threat of confiscation and possible punishment which encouraged the publishers to self-censor and to frequently resort to books which were perceived as 'safe'. The first measure to be introduced that specifically targeted translations, along with political writings, were new regulations that came into force in 1935 and that required prior permission to be sought before the rights to a translation could be purchased.

Before translation rights could be purchased, the proposed translation was to be submitted for approval by the [Reich Chamber of Writers], with a summary, a sample of the translation, and details of the author's racial background and the translation's contribution to German understanding of the foreign nation. (Sturge 2010: 61)

The situation was also partly regulated by the *Index 1 of Harmful and Undesirable Writings* [*Liste 1 des schädlichen und unerwünschten Schrifttums*] which was produced by the Reich Chamber of Writers and later by the Literature Section of the Propaganda Ministry (Sturge 2010: 60–61). However, the *Index* did not include a category devoted to translations, although it did list a number of unwanted foreign authors, and, like the

Italian blacklist, it would seem that its main purpose was to purge the market of Jewish authors and other undesirables:

The *Liste's* approximately 4000 individual titles and more than 500 bans on complete works included writing by exiles and anti-Nazi authors as well as categories such as Christian writing, pornography, modernist literature, books on contraception and various others; what it did not include as a category was translated literature *per se*. (Sturge 2010: 60)

There were also additional barriers that affected translations. In schools and public libraries, two institutions that had a significant impact on German reading habits, domestic books were almost always preferred over translations 'since few of them were considered worthy of joining the "arsenal" of intellectual weapons which the literary policymakers were aiming to amass.' (Sturge 2010: 61)

With the onset of the war, a blanket ban was imposed in December 1939 on all translations of books, first from Britain, and then from other 'enemy' countries as they joined the war. The books did not necessarily have to be destroyed, but they had to be withdrawn from circulation until the war was over. The ban was applied to a nationality or race, rather than a source language, so it was possible to publish an Irish author in English, but not a British, American or Jewish one. Also, authors who were out of copyright were exempt; implying that at least one of the reasons for the ban was to avoid hard currency being transferred to enemy states (Sturge 2010: 63). This more mercenary motivation contrasts strikingly with the much more ideological motives behind the anti-translation measures that were eventually imposed in Italy.

There were also special exemptions for specific authors or works that served a political purpose regardless of their nationality:

Specific exemptions also applied to authors or, more commonly, individual works considered to be useful for the war effort, apparently due to their denunciatory quality, whether by pro-Nazi (as in the case of Wyndham Lewis for *Der mysteriöse John Bull*, 1939) or anti-capitalist authors (as in Sinclair Lewis for *Babbitt*, 1942). (Sturge 2010: 64)

What is striking about the censorship of translation in Germany is the level of disorganization and confusion that applied. Lest we allow this impression of Nazi incompetence to lull us into a false sense of life in Germany being easier for a publisher than we thought, it is as well to remind ourselves that of all four regimes, Germany was by far the most dangerous in which to make a mistake. While in Italy, Spain and Portugal, if you were unfortunate enough to fall foul of the censor the most you usually risked was some degree financial damage, in Germany 'those who were not seen to be acting as loyal helpers were liable to lose their livelihood, freedom or even life' (Sturge 2010: 62).

Spain

The Franco regime lasted over 35 years (1939-1975) and its censorship policies went through a number of very complex evolutions. With reference to Abellán (1980), Vandaele (2010: 87-88) has provided a useful periodization which has the merit of foregrounding those phases in which the fascist elements of the Falange were more influential and those in which it was the conservative Catholic values of the church

which dominated. In the post-war period, which is what concerns us here, Vandaele identifies four distinct phases which I briefly summarize below with some additional details of my own.

The transition (1945–50): In April 1938 a tough new Press Law had established a rigid system of preventive censorship under the direction of the Falangist Party which was to remain in force until 1966 (Payne 2008: 15). During this post-war transition period, in which Spain had to adjust to the defeat of the Axis and a new world dispensation, control over the State Censorship Board was passed back from the Falangist party to the Franco-controlled and Catholic-dominated government.

Falangists were still present in the board but they had less influence than previously.

The ultra-Catholic decade (1950–63): A period of thirteen years during which the ultra-Catholics took over the State Censorship Board. They were comparatively less political than the Falangists and were mainly concerned with maintaining a very strict morality; an approach which progressively alienated the population and which became increasingly difficult to accept as the growing presence in Spain of international tourists brought the Spanish people into much more regular contact with the outside world (Rosendorf 2006; Pack 2006). The criteria used were fairly predictable. The board would censor

any criticism of the regime's ideology, anything considered immoral (including sexuality, blasphemy, suicide, etc.), anything which contradicted the Nationalist historiography, any criticism of the civil order, any apology for Marxist and non-authoritarian ideologies, and (in principle) any work

by authors hostile to the regime (Abellán 1980: 112, cited by Pegenaute 1999: 89).

Arias Salgado remained in charge of censorship and in 1951, when he was made Minister of the newly formed Ministry of Information and Tourism, responsibility for censorship was moved to this ministry (Payne 2012: 416). Of the impact he had on Spanish cultural life the *New York Times* correspondent Benjamin Welles has written:

After Franco, no man bears greater responsibility for the stultification of Spanish culture, for the despair of Spain's intellectuals, for the indifference of Spanish youth, or for Spain's poor image in the world. From 1937 to 1962, Arias Salgado epitomized the intellectual garrotting of his countrymen's minds. (Welles 1965: 88, cited by Rosendorf 2006: 386)

The Apertura (opening) (1963–69): This period began with the appointment in 1962 of Manuel Fraga Iribarne as the minister of Information and Tourism, finally replacing Gabriel Arias Salgado. Fraga was a reformist but was also careful not to become associated with any anti-regime position (Payne 2000: 432). In this period tourism continued to have a significant impact. On the one hand the Ministry actively tried to promote Spain's international image (Rioja Barrocal 2010), and there was a widespread consensus that the country needed to open itself up in order to restart the economy; on the other hand, people were weary of the Catholic morality being imposed by the same Ministry (Rosendorf 2006; Pack 2006).

In 1966 a new Press Law was passed which replaced the 1938 law and abolished pre-publication censorship. Although it did not remove censorship all together, according

to Payne it 'greatly reduced its extent' (2000: 434). There was a significant increase in publications on contemporary history and current affairs leading to the formation of a 'parliament of paper' by the 1970s which, according to Payne, went some way towards compensating for the lack of an elected one (2000: 434). Both Pegenaute (1999: 90–91) and Vandaele (2010: 87–88), however, argue that the law had the effect of strengthening post-publication censorship because it made authors directly responsible for what they wrote, thereby encouraging publishers and authors to self-censor more; a view also expressed by editors and translators interviewed by Meseguer Cutillas (2015: 231; 235). According to Pegenaute the main purpose of the law was

to suggest abroad that things were changing in a country that had apparently left repression behind; and to satisfy the aspirations of the Spanish bourgeoisie without really allowing political controversy.

(Pegenaute 1999: 90–91)

Late Francoism (1969–75): During this final period of the regime private Church censorship, which had increasingly lost all social relevance, was abolished. To some extent the policies of the *Apertura* were maintained but there were also Catholics who sought to reimpose greater rigidity (Vandaele 2010: 88).

Significantly, there is no evidence that specific rules or procedures were introduced with respect to translation. They were censored for any unacceptable content, of course, probably more carefully and more efficiently than in either Germany or Italy, but translations do not appear to have been viewed as a threat purely by virtue of their

being foreign. There is no sign in Francoist Spain of the kind of cultural paranoia over the dangers of translation that we have seen in Germany and Italy. This clearly ties in with the very different political status of the Franco regime and the way in which it defined itself and related itself to the outside. As a conservative para-fascist regime, put in power by the military and supported by the church, its main purpose was continuity and the avoidance of any upheaval. Far from having fascist ambitions of national renewal, one of the regime's main objectives was to prevent any possible fascist revolution; which it did by incorporating the Falangists within the regime and effectively neutralizing them.

Portugal

Despite having lasted marginally longer than the Franco regime, the history of the *Estado Novo's* censorship institutions is much less complex. The first censorship law was introduced in 1933 and later reinforced in 1936. The law created a censorship office called the Secretariat for National Propaganda, headed by António Ferro, and imposed close preventive monitoring of all periodical publications and also, at the behest of Salazar himself, introduced much closer monitoring of books (Seruya 2010: 129). The same institution would continue to act as the state censor until the collapse of the regime in 1974, although it changed name twice: first to National Secretariat of Information, Popular Culture and Tourism in 1944, and then to State Secretariat of Information and Tourism in 1968. (Interestingly, the Italian Fascist state censor made a similar change to its name in 1937, from Ministry for the Press and Propaganda to Ministry for Popular Culture.) The association in both Spain and Portugal between

censorship, popular culture and tourism seems significant; in other words the same institution was responsible for those aspects of cultural life that involved interaction with the outside. It is also significant that such an association was only conceivable in post-war Europe and with the birth of mass tourism that it witnessed.

In 1934 a Censorship Commission for books was formed and was staffed by army officers, as had been the practice since the 1926 military coup. Civilians would only be introduced into the Commission much later (Seruya 2010: 129). Unlike periodical publications, there was no preventive censorship of books. Seruya (2010: 129) states that there was a voluntary system which allowed publishers to request a prior opinion if they wanted, but that the normal system was to deposit six copies with the authorities and then go ahead and distribute the book. Rendeiro (2010: 76–78) describes a slightly different system where publishers were legally obliged to inform the Censorship Commission of the titles they intended to publish, and the Commission would then decide whether preventive censorship was called for or not. Both Seruya and Rendeiro agree that the Commission also relied on unsuitable publications being reported by the Police and the Post Office, as well as by booksellers and newsagents who were fearful of being shut down or incurring heavy fines.

The criteria used to censor books were fairly predictable in Portugal too: unsuitable political propaganda; ideological deviance; sexual immorality; excessive realism (considered damaging to unprepared readers); social elitism; unhealthy philosophical or scientific speculation (for a detailed outline of these criteria see Seruya and Lin Moniz 2008: 11–18). According to Seruya and Lin Moniz no blanket bans were put in

place against either specific topics or individual authors and each work was considered on its individual merits, with the exception of Surrealism and its authors which were, apparently, systematically banned (Seruya and Moniz 2008: 10). Like Italy and unlike Germany, the regime was sensitive to its international image and so in some cases a ban was not imposed in order to avoid possible embarrassment. The regime also maintained a double standard that is fairly typical of right-wing authoritarian regimes whereby the elite were permitted to read books in a foreign language that were banned from being translated into Portuguese (Seruya 2010: 132). The moral censorship of the regime was very severe, even in the case of undisputed classics such as Shakespeare. The history plays were almost never authorized for performance and all the plays were aggressively bowdlerised to remove passages that were too sexually suggestive (Coelho 2010: 218). Coelho describes how *Romeo and Juliet* was approved only for adult audiences, and how an 'obsessive concern with sexual innuendo' led to the following lines being cut:

'By her fine foot, straight leg and quivering thigh/and the demesnes that there adjacent lie', and 'Now we will sit under a medlar tree/and wish his mistress were that kind of fruit'. (Coelho 2010: 228)

In the political, cultural and moral climate of the *Estado Novo*, then, ideas and immoral practices could be seen as a threat and these could be transmitted by translations as well as by domestic products. But existing evidence would appear to suggest that translation in itself, as a phenomenon, was not seen as a threat and did not need to be subjected to specific limitations or quotas. As in Italy, the disapproval of translations

by sections of the publishing and cultural establishment did not push the regime into taking any drastic measures. Translations were simply monitored and censored like any other Portuguese product using the same criteria.

Anti-Semitism in Italy and Germany

To conclude this extended comparison, I want to consider what implications the adoption of anti-Semitism had on the policies towards translation of Italy and Germany. Anti-Semitism was part of Nazi ideology from its inception and the discourse on translation in Germany in the 1930s was always highly racialized:

There is, as well, an extent to which the very fact of translatedness – literature as a mixed product of more than one language tradition – ran counter to the crucial tenet of racialized purity that underlay Nazi cultural policy. (Sturge 2010: 51)

This meant that, unlike in Italy where the sheer number of translations was a permanent affront to its cultural prestige, in Germany translation could be seen in positive terms as well as negative, when viewed from a racial standpoint. While translation could be seen as a form of cultural pollution it could also be interpreted as a positive form of exchange between kindred peoples who belonged to the same *Volk*, as long as certain stereotypes concerning the racially desirable characteristics of the source culture were respected:

For Nazi policymakers, purity in translation was possible: translations might be racially pure and therefore foster racial understanding – a much

longer-standing translation ideal that acquired new dimensions in the Nazi setting. (Rundle and Sturge 2010: 9)

So it was that when Germany did eventually introduce anti-translation bans these were motivated more by strategic considerations related to the war than the result of a fear of the impact of translations *tout court*.

In Italy, on the other hand, official anti-Semitism was introduced significantly later in the life of the regime, in 1938. This development was the culmination of a process which began with the invasion of Ethiopia in 1935. With the founding of a new colony, it became all the more important to affirm the natural superiority of the Italian people over their new colonial subjects (Bernardini 1977: 441–442). Laws with a biological justification were introduced to impose a strict separation between Italians and indigenous peoples and to discourage mixed families by denying their offspring any right to Italian citizenship (Cassina Wolff 2013: 181). Having publicly ridiculed Nazi anti-Semitism and the idea of a 'pure' race in the past (Bernardini 1977: 438–439), Mussolini became convinced that racism was a necessary step:

History teaches that while Empires are conquered by force of arms, they are nevertheless maintained by prestige. And to have prestige, it is necessary to develop a clear racial consciousness which establishes not only the sharpest differences between races, but also levels of superiority. (Mussolini in *Giornale d'Italia*, 20 September 1938, cited by Bernardini 1977: 442)

In terms of the impact of this racism on books, so imperative were the orders from above to purge all but the most exceptional Jews from Italian cultural life that any earlier reticence the censor might have felt in obstructing the Italian publishers and imposing damaging restrictions on them were abandoned. Once the purge was complete, the then Minister for Popular Culture, Alessandro Pavolini, could turn his attention to translations. The Minister disapproved of translations because he saw them as a phenomenon that seriously undermined the cultural prestige of the nation. It was unseemly for Italy to be so passively receptive and to be so unsuccessful in exporting its own culture abroad. As we saw earlier, he decided to redress the situation imposing a quota to restrict the number of translations entering Italy. What is significant with this quota is that, unlike the Nazi ban, it targeted all translations indiscriminately, regardless of the source language (even translations from classical languages were included); it was a measure intended to hinder the very act of translation, seen in this context as an act of un-fascist weakness.

Conclusion

If there is one thing that the many studies of fascism show it is that there is a clear difference between what fascism is in theory and the way it was concretely realised as a political reality. This emerges very clearly in the four regimes we have examined. In each case a different balance was achieved between competing right-wing authoritarian forces, and each regime was fascist to a different extent and in a different way. Their configurations also evolved over time, with the war and the defeat of the Axis representing a significant *caesura* between the more fully developed

pre-war fascism of Italy and Germany and the more conservative and reactionary post-war para-fascism of Spain and Portugal. How, then, does research on translation fit into this picture?

We have seen that negotiating the foreign was a much more complex ideological operation in Italy and Germany than it was in Spain and Portugal. Not only did the latter not share the former's heightened sense of cultural paranoia, but in Spain in the 1960s some Falangists actually pressed for a more open cultural environment in opposition to the suffocating censorship imposed by the Church. We have also seen that the hostility towards the foreign observed in the two pre-war regimes was closely linked to the adoption of racism (from the outset in Germany and much later in Italy). But the more racialized Nazi conception of cultural exchange meant that when conditions of racial purity were respected it was possible to view it positively; while in Italy, once the rhetoric of racism had taken hold in the cultural discourse, the idea of translation as a kind of cultural miscegenation was applied indistinctly. As a 'dominant' race it was Italy's role to disseminate its culture in the world, not to open itself up indiscriminately to others. Another, related, distinction lies in the way that translation became bound up in the regime's perception of its own prestige in Italy and Germany; while neither Spain nor Portugal appear to have seen translation (and its success) as a similar challenge to their status.

These distinctions are all reflected in the different policies these regimes adopted towards translations. Neither Spain nor Portugal specifically targeted translations (despite some hostility being expressed in Portugal); translations were simply subject

to the same rules and restrictions as domestic products. Spain's censorship policies were particularly severe, at least up until 1966, but they were not aimed specifically at translations. In Germany, despite years of complaints and a cultural environment in the throes of a violent anti-Semitic purge, translations continued to enter the country in surprising numbers; although the barriers that were in place probably meant that many of these texts were being pre-selected to avoid problems with the censors. It has to be said that this degree of permeability is somewhat surprising in a regime that many consider to be the only fully realised fascist regime. Italy was also surprisingly permeable and it took the regime a long time to act against translations. The permeability of both the Nazi and Fascist regimes is indicative of a much less absolute control over the cultural industries than we might expect. Neither regime wanted to damage a healthy publishing industry unnecessarily, and in neither regime was the hostility towards translation unanimously felt.

This raises the question, what significance should we attribute to the fact that, although large numbers of translations were being published in all four regimes, many of these will have been pre-censored in some way during the publication process?

How we answer that question depends on whether we view translations as individual texts or as an overall publishing phenomenon, as I have done in this chapter. From this perspective, it is the very existence of translations that is significant and not the fact that these translations were frequently modified and adulcorated. How each regime reacted to this overall phenomenon is seen as an indicator of its cultural permeability.

If we accept Griffin's definition of fascism as an ideology that seeks national *palingenesis*, rebirth and renewal (Griffin 1993: 44), we can perhaps add that research on translation shows us that in a fascist context this renewal must come from within the racial confines that each permutation of fascism defines for itself and that cultural exchange beyond these confines is always seen as a threat to its prestige. In those para-fascist contexts, on the other hand, that adopt the trappings of fascism but seek no national palingenesis, translation does not, in itself, constitute a threat or a challenge.

Related topics

Translation and censorship, Translation and violence, Translation and war,

Translation and communism in Eastern Europe

Further Reading

Kallis, A. A. (ed.) (2003) *The Fascism Reader*, London; New York: Routledge.

An excellent volume with which to start engaging with fascism studies. Kallis' introduction provides a thorough and comprehensible overview of the evolution of complex disciplinary area and the reader includes excerpts from all the key studies.

Rundle, C. and Sturge, K. (eds) (2010) *Translation Under Fascism*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 3-12.

This volume provides a series of overview essays and detailed case studies on translation in the four regimes discussed in this chapter.

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