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# **Translator work practices and the construction of the correct interpretation of Marxism in post-war Greece**

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In 1951, the Communist Party of Greece published a Greek translation of the *Selected Works of Marx and Engels* which included a statement on the work practices followed for its creation. This article considers work practices as processes of validated knowledge production. It investigates how they were enacted to create the ‘correct’ translation of Marxist texts, and advances our understanding of the relationship between social structures, power, and processes of validated knowledge production. It argues that the party’s collaborative, centralised, and professionalised organisational model alongside mechanisms of surveillance and discipline of agents in translation supported its claims of owning the ‘correct’ interpretation of Marxism. The statement on the work practices was intended to influence the publication’s reception: the reader was encouraged to accept the party’s translation as accurate. Adopting a Foucauldian perspective, the investigation draws on party publications and archival material to study translation work practices in novel ways.

**Keywords:** work practices, translator work practices, translation of Marxism, Marxism in Greece, translation and knowledge production, history of Marxist discourse

## 1. Introduction

In 1951, the Communist Party of Greece published a Greek translation of the *Selected Works of Marx and Engels* (henceforth *Selected Works*), titled *Μαρξ Ένγκελς Διαλεχτά Έργα Marx Engels Dialechta Erga xxxxx*. It was carried out by a group of agents involved at different stages of the translation process, such as translators and revisers, who were employed in the party's Department of Classics for the purpose of translating theoretical Marxist texts. The publication included an explicit statement on the work practices followed for its creation. This article investigates how these practices were enacted to create the correct interpretation of Marxism as the party saw it. It aims at broadening our understanding of the relationship between social structures, power, and processes of validated knowledge production. It will be argued that these work practices supported both the party's claims of owning the correct interpretation of Marxism and the continuation of its dominance on Marxist discourse. Adopting a Foucauldian perspective, the investigation, which is a work in progress and the first of its kind in the Greek context, draws on party publications as well as published and unpublished material from the archive of the Communist Party of Greece (Κομμουνιστικό Κόμμα Ελλάδας *Kommounistiko Komma Elladas*, henceforth KKE) located at the Contemporary Social History Archives (ASKI, Αρχεία Σύγχρονης Κοινωνικής Ιστορίας *Archeia Syngchronis Koinonikis Istorias*) in Athens and available to the public.

Although principles and methods that are or should be followed during translation have received attention in Translation Studies, there is little research on how these underpin the work practices of translators and affect the status of resulting knowledge. However, it is generally accepted in all fields of knowledge production that for knowledge to become authoritative, professionals must adhere to practices valued in a society as suitable or necessary. Similarly, in translation, the legitimisation of an interpretation as a correct rendering of an original is

affected by how it has been created. This relationship between processes of legitimisation and work practices links the latter to broader political concerns. Approaching practices from this political perspective can illuminate the complex interplay between power, social organisation, and the construction of authorised knowledge.

The study of human practice encompasses an array of settings and contexts, from professional and organisational to the privacy of one's home, as well as a wealth of theoretical perspectives. The focus of this paper is specifically on work practices, and these are often conceptualised as "those actions members take in the accomplishment of organizational goals" (Leonardi 2015, 253). Work practices support an institution's objectives and, so, are defined and limited by institutional priorities. They also include established methods of action taking, repeatable procedures and control mechanisms, and are, thus, deliberate and regular.

This article reconstructs work practices followed by agents in translation in the *Selected Works*. It begins with a contextualisation of the *Selected Works*, followed by the purpose of its publication, the presentation of the theoretical framework used for analysis, and research in Translation Studies. This leads to a detailed examination of the work practices including analyses of (a) the method deemed appropriate by the KKE for the translation of theoretical Marxist texts, (b) the organisational principles in the Department of Classics, and (c) the structures and processes that operationalised this method.

## ***2. The Selected Works of Marx and Engels***

Published in 1951, the *Selected Works* is a two-volume, scholarly publication. The KKE's full alignment with the Communist Party of the USSR is emphasised and reinforced in the publication, which commemorated Stalin's seventieth birthday. A "Note by the Publishing House of the Central Committee of the KKE" at the beginning of the publication states that

the first volume of the Greek edition corresponds to the first volume of the Russian edition as “edited by the Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute” in Moscow (1948) (Anon 1951a, n.p.). The Institute published official translations and other theoretical Marxist texts authorised by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, and the Greek edition contained, as stated, the same texts that had been selected by the Institute.

The Greek publication was authorised by the party’s leading body, its Central Committee, itself guided by the Soviets’ assumed theoretical and practical expertise in Marxism. It contained works and excerpts from works, such as *The Manifesto of the Communist Party*, *Wage Labour and Capital*, *The Civil War in France*, prefaces, and a selection of the authors’ personal correspondence which elucidates theoretical aspects of Marxist theory. It was an important publication both for the KKE and for Marxist discourse in Greece because it introduced works by the authors that had been previously unavailable in the target language and provided interpretative comments and references to other sources of information which facilitated the study of Marxism. As it was the most comprehensive selection of Marx’s and Engels’s works at the time, anyone wishing to study Marxism, write a Marxist text or translate Marxist works into Greek would have to consult this publication. Thus, it was intended to shape Marxist discourse in Greece, and it marks the process of codification of the theory in that language.

The Note mentioned above also makes an explicit statement on work practices:

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 1951a, n.p; my translation)

The reader is alerted to the practices followed. Translation was a collaborative endeavour, involving agents with an array of responsibilities. It was carried out directly from the source language and revised, and other translations had been consulted. These work processes are generally valued in contemporary societies as appropriate and meticulous and, thus, encourage the assumption that the translations are accurate renderings of the original texts.

### **3. Discourse domination**

The Department of Classics was set up with the explicit remit of translating the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin, and the *Selected Works* is one of the earliest translations carried out there. The Department was a subdivision of the Translation Section, which gradually became the centre of the KKE's previously dispersed translation activity. The Translation Section was, in turn, part of the KKE's Publishing House (1949–1954) based in Bucharest, Romania, whose activities were supervised by the Committee for Enlightening (Mattheou and Polemi 2003, 56). After 1954, some operations of the Publishing House were modified and staff with text-writing responsibilities were transferred to the border town of Dej where translation activity continued. Bucharest became progressively the seat of the KKE's apparatus after the party's defeat in the civil war of 1946–1949. The KKE was illegal in Greece and its members and supporters were persecuted; those who followed the retreat of the army formed by the KKE became political refugees dispersed in countries of the Eastern bloc where the party mainly operated.

Yet, despite these circumstances, the translation of theoretical Marxist texts was a central priority as reflected in the output of the party's Publishing House: in 1951, translations

amounted to 50.8% of the KKE's publications; the 'classics' alone (i.e., works by Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin) made up 28.9% of all translations (Mattheou and Polemi 2003, 64). Moreover, unlike pre-war efforts, the focus of translation activity concerning the 'classics' was exclusively on scholarly, often multivolume, publications of selected and collected works (ibid.), a labour- and resource-intensive endeavour. Given the political conditions, these publications were practically impossible to distribute in Greece and yet the translation of the classics specifically as scholarly publications was a priority for the KKE. This appears puzzling until the political context of translation is considered.

Regardless of the party's continuing wish to improve the political education of its members, the focus on the translation of the classics is linked to pre-war developments in the communist movement internationally. In 1927, the KKE made explicit its aspiration to dominate Marxist discourse in Greece, declaring that "our Party should aim at the monopoly of representation of the Marxist-Leninist theory" in order to marginalise rival, ostensibly Marxist political forces (Rizospastis 1927, 1). In other words, the KKE declared its intention to control the interpretation of the theory and to be acknowledged as its rightful representative. As seminal Marxist texts were written in German, Russian, and English, dominating Marxist discourse entailed the codification of the theory through translation (Delistathi 2011a, 208-209) and greater control of the translation process.

In the late 1920s, the KKE began to characterise other left-wing forces, which challenged its position in the labour movement, as agents of the bourgeoisie. This new approach was common across communist parties internationally and a corollary to the process of Stalinisation that these parties underwent, which initiated fundamental theoretical and organisational changes within them. These concerned, broadly, the model of economic development within the USSR and the prospects for socialist revolutions elsewhere. Making this interpretation of Marxism dominant in Greece was, thus, urgent for the KKE, key to

securing its prevalence at the ideological level. However, a succession of repressive governments as well as World War II and the civil war stalled this effort. By the early 1950s, the party had established itself politically as the dominant force in the Marxist-oriented Left. Its pre-war rivals on the Left had been depleted and the KKE and the Stalinist interpretation dominated Marxist discourse in Greece – hostility towards competing interpretations shifted against Titoism and against members who were critical of the regimes of the Eastern bloc. It was a time of political upheaval within the KKE, which often accused its own members of deviations from the true letter of the theory as a way of suppressing internal disagreement and dissent. The 1950 party conference emphasised the need for vigilance in relation to members with unfavourable views of the Eastern bloc and those who “pretended to be ‘hyper-revolutionary’”, superficially agreeing with the party, but secretly aiming to destroy it (KKE 1995, 85).<sup>1</sup>

Dominating Marxist discourse served two major objectives: to strengthen the party’s control over its own members and to sustain the dominance of its interpretation of Marxism. The latter entailed efforts to control both the present and the future of Marxist theory by guarding it from existing and prospective rival readings; the codification of the theory through scholarly publications was a means to this end. These new, authorised, and assumed definitive translations aimed at shaping the development of Marxist discourse in Greece. They would supersede and, thus, marginalise all previous translations (where these existed), evaluate works by the authors, and rank them in order of importance, influencing the study of Marxism: the preface of the *Selected Works* classified the texts in the publication as the authors’ “most important works” (Anon 1951b, 1). Moreover, not only would these new translations expand

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<sup>1</sup> Several members were expelled that year, among them Kostas Karagiorgis, who initially headed the Publishing House and was accused of [treasonspying](#), and Panayiotis Mavromatis, a translator in the Department of Classics (from German), who was accused of “anti-Soviet sentiments” (KKE 1995, 87), but who kept his employment (Georgiou 1992, 610).



Marxist discourse by making available previously untranslated works, but the focus on selected and collected works demonstrated that Marxism could become the object of scholarly enquiry for a Greek-speaking readership. As mentioned earlier, the aim was that no one wishing to study or write on Marxism in Greek could afford to ignore the KKE's *Selected Works of Marx and Engels*.

Essential to the project of codifying Marxism was, then, greater control over what was translated, by whom, and how. Codification required standardised and controlled work practices, that is, specific translation methods, structures, and processes to effectuate authoritative translations. Foucault's (1994) concept of 'regimes of truth' provides an analytical framework that links work practices to discourse domination, and is discussed in the next section.

#### **4. Regimes of truth**

Referring to validated scientific knowledge, Foucault (1994, 131) contends that "truth is a thing of this world." He reminds us that what a society widely accepts as true and correct is a social construct created in an array of complex social configurations. His hypothesis is that

each society has its regime of truth, its "general politics" of truth – that is, the types of discourse it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances that enable one to distinguish true and false statements; the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true. (Foucault 1994, 131)

In this sense, statements are not inherently true or false, but some statements are accepted as true because they are part of powerful discourses. For Foucault (1994), “‘truth’ is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extend it” (132). Knowledge is then “both generated and generative” (Winter and Cree 2016, 1176). This recursive relationship between “power, the capacity to influence what counts as knowledge, and the capacity to circulate those claims” further assists the dissemination and reproduction of truth (Cronin 2004, 352). Foucault, thus, provides a framework that illuminates processes of knowledge production (Gore 1993, 135), but also of power production, which are pertinent to the analysis of translation work practices.

Foucault critiques epistemological assumptions that are taken-for-granted and are, thus, considered ahistorical and apolitical. The explicitly political term ‘regime’ connects truth as validated knowledge directly to political agendas (Lorenzini 2015, 2). Additionally, truth is political in ways bearing directly on power: among many statements, only some are admitted in discourse as truths. By addressing the historicity and political character of validated knowledge, Foucault unveils the conditions and processes by which statements come to function as truths (i.e., how consent is created and what mechanisms and processes can discern untruths). However, for Foucault discourses are never absolute or totalising (Nicholls 2012, 450); alternative knowledges are not eliminated but only subjugated (Avgerou and McGrath 2007, 299), so an array of diverse knowledges may coexist at a given time, but as marginal and peripheral. Consequently, dominant truths do not mean uncontested truths; validated knowledge is contingent and changeable (Lorenzini 2016, 73).

Moreover, specific institutionalised means and processes, such as professional organisations and qualifications, as well as quality standards, function as mechanisms to preclude and disqualify certain statements as untruths whilst valorising others. In this sense, truth “is the issue of a whole political debate and social confrontation (‘ideological’ struggles)”

(Foucault 1994, 131). Moreover, truth statements are not simply the result of social processes and structures; instead, who utters them and their position in the nexus of power is decisive in gaining entry in discourse, a position similar to Bourdieu's (1977), who contends that whether statements are admitted in discourse as truths depends on the authority vested in their speakers.

Additionally, Foucault denies that the technologies and procedures which produce and sustain truth are neutral, and prompts us to think of the relationship between the status of truth claims and the means of their creation. Foucault reminds us that for knowledge to become validated, the practices employed for its construction, which include methods, processes, and technologies, have to be admitted by a community as appropriate and rigorous. As with statements, these have also been selected among other possibilities, which have been valued as impermissible or inapposite, and function as gatekeeping mechanisms constructing, reproducing, and regulating truth. Approaching the study of practices through the notion of regimes of truth allows us to "interrogate the everyday" (Winter and Cree 2016, 1187), the normative practices which have gained wide consensus and have become common sense, as well as their effects and their relation to power and knowledge. In this way, Foucault shows the interconnectedness of mundane everyday practices with the broader domain of ideas, the historicity of such practices and their relationship with broader social and political struggles for domination which are pertinent to this discussion.

The concept of regimes of truth pertains mostly to discourses of dominant ideas in society. However, as Gore (1993, 56) shows, Foucault's own references to local centres of power-knowledge allow us to perceive society at a more micro level "whereby discourses and practices can contain a local politics of truth." This observation affords an expansion of the application of the concept to discourses of counter-hegemonic ideas, such as Marxism in Greece, and the acknowledgment that these contain their own constellation of power relations (Delistathi 2017).

Along these lines, the Stalinist interpretation of Marxism, dominant within Marxist discourse, can be regarded as a regime of truth. By aligning itself with, propagating, and practicing that version, the KKE had generally succeeded in gaining the status of the correct interpreter of Marxism in Greece and this association was reinforced with various references to the Soviet edition in the *Selected Works*, as mentioned earlier. The prevalence of this version of Marxism was the product of political developments, and translations functioned as means of sustaining and reproducing the regime of truth, even more so as they entered academic discourse in the form of scholarly publications and, thus, became the version of Marxism to study. Foucault's consideration of techniques and procedures and of their value in the production of truth, brings work practices into focus. Following work practices which were and still are widely accepted as rigorous, actualised the translations whilst adding credibility to the interpretation presented in them, and advanced the codification of Marxism and the further reproduction of the dominant version.

## **5. Research in translation work practices**

The study of work practices is an emerging research area in Translation Studies. Employing an array of theoretical frameworks, such as Bourdieu's sociological approach (Simeoni 1998; Inghilleri 2005) and Luhmann's social theory (Hermans 2007; Tyulenev 2012), existing scholarship has investigated literary and non-literary translator practices both in commercial and non-commercial institutional settings with diverse research aims. Koskinen (2008) investigates translation in the European Commission, and conceives of it as a collective process in which the translator bears limited responsibility for the final version. Buzelin (2007), in the context of independent commercial publishers, shows how changes in publishing impact on publishers' management of translation projects, and concludes that the resulting translations

are cooperative in nature and reflect the outcome of a process of negotiation between different agents.

Olohan (2017) is one of few scholars who relate practice to knowledge. Using practice theory, she considers aspects of practice in the translation department of a research organisation to discuss how translators' collective knowing is enacted in those practices. In a later work, Olohan (2020) further develops practice theory as an analytical tool to study, conceptualise, and interpret translation practice in commercial settings. Although it focuses on the situational context and knowing in practice, the analysis is not concerned with the relationship between practice and power or their effects on the production of knowledge.

A notable attempt to consider explicitly the impact of social structures on the practice of translation can be found in Mossop (2006). Locating the Canadian government's translation activity in a context of new political priorities, Mossop shows how these generate new perceptions of translation and alter practice. While translation had previously been seen as an exclusively cultural activity, it was subsequently transformed into an economic one, in the sense of "treating translation as a business" (Mossop 2006, 18). Mossop terms this shift "industrialisation of translation," and states that it is marked by various changes in the organisation of work practices, such as the division of labour among translators, standardisation of work organisation, and quality management (10–11), which, in turn, moulded translators' lexical choices. Mossop's attention to the transformative effect of new exigencies on work practices and his conceptualisation of these advance understanding of the relationship between structural changes at the macro level and translator choices at the micro level. As will be discussed in Section 6.2, the analysis in this article bears some similarities to the "industrialisation of translation" in relation to the organisation of work.

Overall, the exploration of work practices in Translation Studies has been valuable in positioning translators in a matrix of relations and socio-political concerns and has opened up

new strands of investigation; nevertheless, existing studies do not specifically explore the correlation between work practices and validated knowledge and, thus, our understanding of this aspect of translation is still limited. The next sections consider this in detail by analysing the work practices employed in the translation of the *Selected Works*, starting with the translation method and continuing with the organisational principles and the power structures and processes which made translation happen.

## **6. Translation method: Correctness and truth**

The establishment of the Translation Department corresponded with the first explicit statements by the KKE on translation methods. Petros Rousos, member of the party's Central Committee and second secretary of the Committee for Enlightening which oversaw the activities of the Publishing House, was himself involved in the final inspection of translations. Reviewing the Greek translation of Stalin's *Collected Works*, Rousos articulated the party's views, acknowledged the problem of how best to translate Marxist theoretical texts, and described the method to be followed:

Experience shows that the most correct rendering is achieved with greater adherence to the original, and with the best possible expression by the means afforded by the language of translation (for us the Greek language), and with the maximum possible preservation of the author's style. Word-for-word translation can kill the text because it disregards the underlying difference[s] in the texture of languages. A freer translation shows irresponsibility. (Rousos 1953, 79–80; my translation)

Rousos's statement recalls the well-known debate about free versus word-for-word translation and proposes a generally accepted method. The objective is to create "the most correct" translation among other possibilities, in Foucauldian terms the 'truth'. Although correctness here, as I understand it, refers to accuracy of meaning transfer and stylistic faithfulness to the source text, these concerns are mitigated by attention to fluency and readability. The optimum method to translate is to stay as close to the original as necessary because this can ensure that both priorities of accuracy and style are met. This method presupposes the integrity and sincerity of those involved in translation. This is important because, in the pre-war era, the KKE had accused its rivals on the Left of producing deliberately inaccurate translations with the explicit aim of falsifying Marxism (Delistathi 2017). Moreover, for the party, a single exact meaning of the source text exists objectively and translators should discover and formulate it, so the correct interpretation is established. This definitive interpretation can then be presented once and for all, closing off the reading of the theory, so no rival interpretations can be viable.

However, as Rousos states, other methods to translate exist, but are disqualified. Following a 'freer' translation privileges fluency and style over accuracy with undesirable effects: as it extends the bounds of a translator's subjective interpretation, which can alter the true meaning of the original, it makes allowances for untruths, so it is an irresponsible method. Similarly, word-for-word translation, with its sole emphasis on accuracy of meaning transfer, disregards the author's style and disrupts the readability of the text, obstructing access to the truth. This is an example of how alternative methods for knowledge creation can be disallowed because they are judged to produce unreliable knowledges.

So, only one method is deemed the 'most correct' and it is the one which, if adhered to, can create knowledge authorised by the party. These institutional instructions signify a shift in work practices with traceable effects on translation: the 1951 translation of the Communist Manifesto included in the *Selected Works* appears to be more literal in relation to earlier

versions (Delistathi 2011b, 221). However, this was not always the case. Despite disapproval of word-for-word translation, it was often followed in practice. In 1951, Rousos called again upon the party's translators to avoid word-for-word translation because it results in the unnecessary addition of the personal pronoun before a verb in the target text (Rousos 1951, 49–50). In Greek, the personal pronoun is indicated by a verb's ending. Its explicit addition, he observed, affects the smooth flow of the text and creates an error in meaning transfer because it denotes emphasis in the target language which is absent from the original (ibid.).<sup>2</sup> Using pronouns in this way was, thus, rejected because it resulted in creating untruths.

So, although employees of the Department had been warned against word-for-word translation, as can be seen from Rousos's statement above, it kept reappearing, creating tensions by obstructing both the fluency and accuracy of target texts. Although there is a spectrum of possible strategies to resolve translation problems, again only one can effectuate a correct translation; others create knowledge which is rejected as substandard. Rousos's institutional instructions to translators on how to produce correct translations and avoid errors are instances of the effects that different translation practices may have on knowledge, and of the effects of power on knowledge production. His suggested method to translate was operationalised through specific organisational principles and structures as will be discussed in Section 6.1.

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<sup>2</sup> Rousos provided the following example: where the Russian text says “παλεύουμε για την ειρήνη και καλούμε τους λαούς κλπ” [~~xxxx~~*palevoume gia tin eirini kai kaloume tous laous* ‘~~xxx~~’[we] strive for peace and [we] call on other peoples], if we translate word-for-word εμείς παλεύουμε για την ειρήνη και εμείς καλούμε τους λαούς’ [*emeis palevoume gia tin eirini kai emeis kaloume tous laous* ~~xxxx~~ ‘we strive for peace and we call on other peoples~~xxx~~’] apart from creating a pleonasm, we also make a mistake because in Greek ‘εμείς [~~xxxx~~*emeis* ‘[we]’] will go only where emphasis is needed, that is when you say ‘οι ιμπεριαλιστές ανάβουν τον πόλεμο, ενώ εμείς παλεύουμε για την ειρήνη’ [~~xxxx~~*oi imperialistes anavoun ton polemo, eno emeis palevoume gia tin eirini* ‘~~xxx~~’the imperialists stoke up war, whereas we strive for peace]” (Rousos 1951, 50).



## 6.1 Organisational principles and power relations

The establishment of the Department of Classics which, by 1954, employed fifteen people<sup>3</sup> represents an unambiguous, coherent, and long-term commitment to codifying Marxism which enabled, but also restricted translation. It also brought about a three-way shift in work practices: firstly, whereas before World War II, translation was mostly a solitary undertaking (still overseen and authorised by the party), now it involved a team of translators, revisers, and other agents. Secondly, while previously translation was an ad hoc commission given to selected members, now it became professionalised. Thirdly, whereas earlier translations were performed in a private space, now all aspects of translation activity became eventually centralised in a single workplace.

Teamwork and collaboration between different agents were vital as they made possible the completion of a large volume of translations within tight deadlines. Agents in translation were professionals in the sense that they were salaried party employees for the purpose of producing translations. The institution specified their duties, systematised their work processes, structured and regulated their conduct, and evaluated their output. By making translation a visible and recognisable occupation, the status of translation and of its agents was enhanced within the party. Professionalisation instituted a layer of members proficient in the interpretation of Marxist texts and created a distinct identity for them as competent, skilful, and knowledgeable specialists. Professionalisation is, thus, indicative of the value and weight of translation within the party, but also of regular and standardised work practices.

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<sup>3</sup> ASKI b.286, f.13/48/131. (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.)

Concurrent to professionalisation was centralisation, which facilitated translation by enhancing coordination and assisting communication between agents. This new organisation of work also improved productivity, which was a persistent requirement. The 1950 annual Report on the activities of the Publishing House praised the increase in translation output, which rose gradually from 300 pages per week in March 1950, to 430 and then to 534 later in the year.<sup>4</sup> However, centralisation also constrained translation as it brought about greater control of the institution over its professionals and, consequently, over Marxist theory. New processes were set up to establish and regulate how translation was carried out. Initially, production was organised around collective and individual monthly and annual production plans, which we would call ‘targets’ today, a practice established in 1950.<sup>5</sup> Production plans were distributed to employees and indicated the number of pages to be translated, revised, or otherwise checked by specific deadlines. The 1950 Report mentioned above noted the introduction of the production plan specifically “as a method of permanent control and establishment of the feeling of personal responsibility” of the employees.<sup>6</sup> Control over employees’ work intensified the following year when production plans were further particularised into personal daily plans.<sup>7</sup>

Together with production plans, supervisory and disciplinary mechanisms were also put in place to ensure compliance by prescribing “how and when work is to be carried out” (Norbäck 2000, 65). In 1953, a “Regulation of Internal Order” was issued to the employees of the Publishing House. It defined unacceptable conduct that impeded production, such as “turning up late” for work, “delaying others,” or producing “defective goods,” and stipulated disciplinary procedures and sanctions against culpable employees, ranging from censure to

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<sup>4</sup> ASKI b.294, f.13/56/17.

<sup>5</sup> ASKI b.294, f.13/56/17.

<sup>6</sup> ASKI b.294, f.13/56/17.

<sup>7</sup> ASKI b.109, f.4/1/139.

dismissal.<sup>8</sup> Regarding text production, the Regulation specifically characterised as a defective product “a bad translation which required double the normal time for revision, a reprint due to errors in translation or revision, [and] bad typing which exceeds the tolerable margin of errors and complicates typesetting.”<sup>9</sup> In other words, a mechanism for reporting underperformance was established under which revisers were asked to report translators or other revisers for poor translation quality. Indeed, underperformance was a serious matter and had consequences: in 1953, it was proposed that a female translator who did not perform satisfactorily, work as a typist instead.<sup>10</sup> Consequently, although centralisation advanced the effective coordination of translation, it also intensified the surveillance of employees by the institution and its ability to discipline them and control their work. Despite being professionals, translators and revisers could not translate as they chose; instead, the ultimate expert in translation was the institution, which imposed the standards to be observed.

Finally, the organisation of translation on the principles of collaboration, professionalisation, and centralisation, allowed the standardisation and regularisation of work practices. Indeed, as will be discussed, the procedures followed in the making of the *Selected Works* were repeated in the translation of other Marxist theoretical texts, and so became normative. As they developed into an institutionalised way for translating correctly, their recurrence also functioned as a mechanism of legitimising the published translations as (the only) truthful interpretations of their originals.

## 6.2 Structures and processes

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<sup>8</sup> ASKI b.295, f.13/57/73.

<sup>9</sup> ASKI b.295, f.13/57/73.

<sup>10</sup> ASKI b.239, f.13/1/6.

The Department of Classics was characterised by a high level of organisation, which was required by the high volume of commissioned translations. Given the KKE's close relationship with the Communist Party of the USSR, it is reasonable to assume that the organisation of the Department and the translation processes closely resembled those in the Soviet Union; however, I have not located a similar study in the Soviet context or a document in the KKE's archive to confirm this.

The following discussion draws on the Publishing House's annual production plan for 1955 (written in 1954) for the translation of the classics presented in Mattheou and Polemi (2003, 65), on the remuneration records of 1951<sup>11</sup> and other archival material. Although the translation team of the Department of Classics moved to Dej at the end of 1954, the organisation of work did not change in 1955,<sup>12</sup> so the production plan is a credible record of the established translation process. It indicates a timeline of identical translation processes and stages across several publications, whereas the remuneration records name the different responsibilities and corresponding wages.

Based on the remuneration of staff and job titles, it is possible to describe the institutional hierarchy. At the top was the Head of Department, followed by revisers, translators, and then employees without translation-related responsibilities who were involved in various processes, such as typists for the handwritten drafts. There were also stylists (*στυλίστες* *stylistes*), 'contrasters' (*παραβολή* *paravoli*), correctors (*διορθωτές* *diorthotes*), and proofreaders (*αποδιαβαστές* *apodiavastes*), but it is not always clear what the responsibilities of these agents involved. A party document records that stylists were very helpful in conveying the meaning of texts,<sup>13</sup> by which I understand that stylists may have improved expression in

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<sup>11</sup> ASKI b.239, f.31/1/2.

<sup>12</sup> ASKI b.242, f.13/4/10.

<sup>13</sup> ASKI b.239, f.13/1/6.

the target language. Thus, translators and revisers were primarily concerned with accurate meaning transfer, whereas stylists focused on the fluency of the target text. This was necessary not only because translators did not always adhere to the instruction of avoiding word-for-word translation, as we saw earlier, but also because collaboration between translators and revisers created polyphonic texts; stylists could unify the different voices and improve the overall consistency and readability of a translation.

Regarding contrasting, it was requested that “for this team comrades with the same skills as those of the correctors are needed.”<sup>14</sup> A later document from 1962, which describes the responsibilities for each role, defines a contraster as someone who compares the typed manuscripts with the hand-written ones to ensure that all corrections were accurately integrated.<sup>15</sup> Correctors are recorded in the 1952 staff list together with typists and, so it is likely that they corrected typing errors in drafts. A proofreader, on the other hand, would work on the final approved draft, inserting textual features such as page numbers and tables of contents.<sup>16</sup>

In the early 1950s, positions with translation-creating responsibilities involving the Head of Department, translators, and revisers were occupied by party cadre who were usually also members of the Committee for Enlightening. It is unclear if the translators or revisers received any training or instructions prior to commencing their work. In general, it can be said that knowledge of foreign languages and Marxist theory were insufficient for a translator’s or reviser’s position. To become authorised to translate or revise Marxist theory, a member also had to be trusted by the party, considered to be loyal to its own interpretation of Marxism, and demonstrate this by creating translations in line with this. To ensure constancy, a four-member

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<sup>14</sup> ASKI b.239, f.13/1/6.

<sup>15</sup> ASKI b.250, f.13/12/310.

<sup>16</sup> ASKI b.250, f.13/12/310.

Editorial Committee of the Publishing House was established in 1950, staffed by the Head of the Department of Classics and other high-ranking party officials whose tasks were to oversee the Publishing House's entire work and to approve a publication before its printing (Mattheou and Polemi 2003, 46).

For most of the period covered here, the Head of the Department of Classics was Leonidas Stringos who remained in the party's leadership until 1973. It is likely that the Head set the personal production plans for the Department's employees. According to the 1955 production plan, the Head had overall responsibility for the preparation of a publication and his authorisation (or that of another member of the Editorial Committee) was required before a translation could be printed. This suggests that the Head also had editorial responsibilities and read the final draft of a translation. His decisions overruled everyone else's, facilitating translation, but also limiting and regulating all other agents' actions. In authorising a translation for publication, the Head represented the party; he sanctioned knowledge on behalf of the institution.

Revisers, who succeeded the Head in the power hierarchy, were subdivided into Reviser I and Reviser II. As indicated by the number of pages required to revise in the 1955 production plan and by their higher remuneration, the former had more extensive input than Reviser II. The dates in the 1955 production plan indicate that revision was happening almost in parallel with translation, as it progressed, as opposed to after the completion of the entire draft of a translation. This practice would have accelerated production and made more efficient use of resources, but it would have impeded consistency, for example, in the translation of Marxist terms which were in the process of being standardised into Greek. It is unclear how terminological consistency was maintained, and if this was also part of a reviser's

responsibilities, but later, in the 1960s, a system of cards was used for this purpose, perhaps similar to today's flashcards.<sup>17</sup>

It is not possible to confirm whether revision involved comparison of the target text with the source text or, in the case of the *Selected Works of Marx and Engels*, with a Russian translation. However, the Note by the Publishing House stating the work practices in the *Selected Works* discussed earlier, refers to the use of Russian and English translations, obviously to assist with the interpretation of challenging passages, proclaiming a sophisticated engagement with the translation process. Moreover, in his autobiography, Georgiou, in charge of the Publishing House from 1950 to 1951, commenting on his own involvement with the translation of the classics notes that he had “a rough time” checking in “German, Russian and French dictionaries for the best expression and smooth language” (1992, 610). One way or another, revision involved a serious engagement with the source text, following practices that are common among professional translators in our times. It went beyond the quest for accuracy, also attending to concerns of fluency, as had been instructed by the institution.

It is remarkable, however, that there is no mention of earlier Greek translations as reference material despite the fact that the party's own translation of the Communist Manifesto of 1948 has extensive textual similarities with the 1951 version, which allows us to say with certainty that it had been consulted (Delistathi 2011b, 155). This apparent rejection of previously validated knowledge indicates a desire to discourage the reading of earlier versions. By ignoring its own earlier translations, the party breaks with the past and disowns its previous interpretations in favour of the new codified one. Existing knowledge, as presented in earlier translations, is disqualified as inadequate (see Avgerou and McGrath 2007, 299) and an attempt is made to marginalise it. This is an example of the ways in which what was considered validated knowledge can change and of how retranslation reconfigured Marxist discourse by

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<sup>17</sup> ASKI b250, f.13/12/310.

recasting existing knowledges as peripheral. Alternative knowledges existed, but only the codified version was acceptable as the truth.

As regards translation problems, in theory, revisers and translators had to cooperate for the optimum solution, a practice comparable to state-controlled translation in 1950s East Germany where literary translators were “required to discuss all remarks and corrections made by the editor” (Thomson-Wohlgemuth 2009, 111). However, cooperation did not always happen in practice, as stated by the Director of the Publishing House in 1952 (Mattheou and Polemi 2003, 50). Instead, by identifying translation errors and recommending textual changes, revisers were able to alter the work of translators, directing them to a course of action and, thus, controlling their behaviour. The institution formalised the extent of a reviser’s authority over a translator’s work in the Regulation of Internal Order referred to in Section 6.1. An extensive number of translation errors, in the Foucauldian framework ‘untruths’, was intolerable and translators or revisers who made them ought to be known to the party. Revision was, thus, not simply a process of quality control, of confirming accuracy and rectifying translation errors, it was also a mechanism for detecting those who uttered untruths.

For their part, translators were subdivided into Translator I and Translator II; the latter role appears to have been occupied by less experienced or productive translators. In 1951, the salaries of the translators ranged from 13 000 to 16 000 Romanian Lei, amounts received by a Translator II and Translator I respectively, the latter sometimes with the additional responsibility for ‘styling’.<sup>18</sup> Georgiou (1992, 609) confirms that there was a speaker of German among the team, Panagiotis Mavromatis, who “translated from the German original” as well as “a group of speakers of Russian.” The pace of translation work was intense and deadlines tight, causing complaints among staff (610). To speed up the translation process, a source text was divided between translators and each was given a specific number of pages to

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<sup>18</sup> ASKI b.239, f.31/1/2.



translate. The resulting target text was, thus, the product of the work of several translators, similar to what Jansen and Wegener (2013) term “multiple translatorship.”

Translators collaborated both vertically in the hierarchy, with other agents, and horizontally, among themselves. This was not only due to the division of a text between different translators, but also due to their ability. Indeed, an informal system of apprenticeship or mentoring was in place where less experienced or competent translators often consulted more proficient colleagues when confronted with challenging passages,<sup>19</sup> facilitating the timely completion of a project.

It appears that three versions of a draft were produced, and the workflow of a translation would have been as follows: the Head would distribute individual production plans and initiate the translation process. Translators’ manuscripts would be handed over to typists who would pass on the first draft to Reviser I. Hand-written changes were proposed, passed on to the typist and then to the corrector and/or contraster, and a new version was produced to be checked by Reviser II. A similar process would have followed, with hand-written suggestions by Reviser II sent to the typist and then to the corrector/contraster. The translation was by then at an advanced stage and it is likely that the stylist would take over, smoothing and unifying expression, and forwarding their version for a final check and then proofreading. At that point the footnotes and table of contents would have been added. Finally, the Head (or other authorised official) would comment on the suitability of the manuscript for publication.

This hierarchical, centralised, and professionalised way of working recalls the process of “industrialisation of translation” discussed in Mossop (2006) with its mechanisms of quality management, division of labour, and large volume of translation to be carried out. But, unlike the Canadian government, the KKE did not perceive of translation as an economic activity. Rather, the term “industrialisation of translation” is pertinent here to describe the organisation

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<sup>19</sup> ASKI b.239, f.13/1/6.

of work that resembles a factory production line, with separate stages in production, where each agent completes part of the product and has a distinct place in the hierarchy. As in a production line, the processes are transparent and precise with well-defined steps to follow, which are ordered, standardised, and repeatable for all translations.

The end product was the result of collaborative work. Although many professionals contributed, no one's name is explicitly mentioned except the commissioning party's. This practice is similar to translation activities carried out within EU institutions where translated texts are also the product of teamwork and individuals bear limited responsibility for the final version; the translation "belongs to the institution" (Koskinen 2008, 24) and represents it. In the KKE's case, this established and standardised "network of accountability" (Fournier 1999, 280) between different agents in the hierarchy aimed specifically at eliminating the personal and, therefore, subjective interpretation in favour of a collective and (an assumed) objective one, which represented the institution. A function of the declaration of the work practices at the beginning of the *Selected Works* is to tell the reader that this translation is categorically not the work of identifiable individuals, but the work of a team in the service of the institution which claims authority over the text and expertise in the interpretation of Marxist theory.

The practices that supported the endeavour for accurate and fluent translations, with the corresponding multiple levels of quality control are evaluated in our society as appropriate and rigorous and are consistent with practices followed by experts in translation. They encourage and support the assumption that errors of meaning transfer are minimised and translations are accurate, and corroborate the party's narrative as the authority in the interpretation of Marxist theory. In the KKE's translations, work practices conveyed a political statement: they became a marker of quality, objectivity, trustworthiness, and authority – a marker of correctness, reproducing and further legitimising the KKE's version of Marxism as a regime of truth. It is

an instance of how truth statements and systems of power sustain and remake each other (Foucault 1994, 132).

## **7. Conclusion**

Starting with Foucault's hypothesis that validated knowledge is a social construct, this article set out to examine how the work practices of agents in translation were enacted in the Greek translation of the *Selected Works of Marx and Engels* with the aim of better understanding the relationship between power, social structures, and processes of validated knowledge production. The KKE's efforts to dominate Marxist discourse and establish its own reading of Marxism as a regime of truth entailed the codification of the theory and the creation of definitive translations which would be accepted as the correct interpretation of the theory. The party's own affiliation with the Communist Party of the USSR, and its leading position within the Greek Left, gave it the status and legitimacy to influence what counted as 'truth'.

To succeed in this endeavour, the KKE assumed firm control over the translation process by establishing work practices which are considered rigorous in contemporary societies. It launched itself as the expert in the translation of Marxist theory and instructed on the appropriate method to translate, so the resulting translations would be accurate, fluent, and objective renderings of their originals, and preserve the authors' style. Only knowledge produced according to this method would be authorised and available to readers. Other methods were disqualified as unsuitable, and ensuing knowledges were marginalised as unreliable, closing off alternative readings of Marxist theory. Consequently, earlier Greek translations of texts in the *Selected Works* were rejected as unreliable and cast in the periphery of discourse. Retranslations reconfigured Marxist discourse by changing what was previously considered 'truth' or validated knowledge.

The KKE operationalised its translation method by organising translation on the principles of collaboration, centralisation, and professionalisation, and employed party members to translate and check translations. It established a web of hierarchies of responsibility and accountability to enable translation and to identify and eliminate errors (i.e., untruths). The subjective interpretation of the individual was replaced with the supposed impartiality of teamwork. It also created overt mechanisms of surveillance and discipline, with the explicit aim of controlling the behaviours and outputs of agents in translation, thus restricting their choices. The explicit statement on the work practices they followed was intended to affect the publication's reception: the reader was encouraged to accept the party's translation as the correct interpretation of Marxism. The resulting translations secured the KKE's control over the present and future of Marxist theory by creating the most authoritative renderings that no one wishing to study Marxism in Greek could ignore.

Considering translation work practices as processes of knowledge validation is a novel approach in Translation Studies. It allows us to see work practices through a new perspective which relates them to power preservation and (re)production, and discourse control. 'Truth', created through social structures in which translations were validated to function as 'truth', was generated by power and, in turn, became generative of power. This regime of truth created effects of power both within the KKE, and externally, in society at large, vis-à-vis rival readings of Marxist theory. Foucault's framework provides a set of powerful analytical strategies for the investigation of work practices in translation that can further our understanding of this relationship.

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