

## THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF NECESSITY: TRANSLATION OF NATIONAL LITERATURES IN THE SOVIET UNION

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The history of literary translation in the Soviet Union has remained in the focus of attention of researchers in the recent years. Impressive research in the field of literary translation was done by Brian Baer [Baer 2016; Baer 2011], Daniele Monticelli and Anne Lange [Monticelli 2014: 95–111; Monticelli 2015: 204–209], Susanna Witt [Witt: 155–190], and many others. In this article, I shall try to look upon the issue of literary disparity and the subordinate position of national literatures and their translations into other national languages from a different angle. In order to describe the translation situation in the Soviet Union in the 1960–1980-ies, I shall use statistical data, as well as officially issued recommendatory lists, which might prove useful in defining the true status of national languages and literatures of Soviet Socialist republics in relation to the Russian language. This correlation of language statuses would precondition the demand for translations into and from the national languages, because the demand for translation is directly linked with the parameters of status and prestige of the languages involved in the translation process. The statistics will be followed by several examples in order to illustrate the overall translation tendency in the Soviet Union in the chosen period.

Being translated into Russian — the dominating language of the Soviet Union — was the prerequisite for an author to enjoy recognition in the USSR. Despite the federative multilingualism officially stipulated by the Soviet Constitution [Конституция: 3–49]<sup>1</sup>, it was the Russian language which was the language of the dominating majority and the lingua-franca of the USSR; it was politically maintained as the main language of the state. Throughout the

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<sup>1</sup> See Articles 34, 36, 45, 159

Soviet era, the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic remained the biggest in terms of both its territory and population. The historical domination of the Russian Federation over other republics and autonomies of the Soviet Union consisted, among other factors, in the increase of the role of the Russian language in all spheres of public life, including literature and arts.

The dominant role of the Russian language in literature and publishing is clearly visible from the statistical data, beginning from the number of its speakers and speakers of other national languages of the Soviet Union. The census of 1959 was considered imperfect in terms of the language picture, because its questions on language and ethnicity were not clearly separated. However, the majority of the population (over 90%) of the Russian Federation indicated the Russian language as their main language. The census of 1970, which paid closer attention to the issues of language and ethnicity, demonstrated a clear domination of the Russian language, with almost 141.8 mln. people naming it a native language (out of the total population, which made almost 241.7 mln. people). 41.9 mln. people named Russian their second language, which means that 183.7 mln. people, or more than 75 % of the total population of the country, could speak the Russian language [Болдырев: 7, 46].

The given figures ensured the position of the Russian language in the hierarchy of literary space: publications in Russian enjoyed better promotion and a wider audience, which included readers who used Russian as both the first and the second language. Thus, for instance, in 1965, the number of books published in the Soviet Union in the Russian language equaled 57 521 out of the total number of 76 101, which made exactly 75% of the total number of the published titles [Печать СССР 1966: 10]. The proportion remained stable in the subsequent years, the number of Russian titles amounting to almost 77% in 1972 [Печать СССР 1974: 9] and almost 78% in 1980 [Печать СССР 1981: 24]. The relation of the titles published in the Russian language to the total number of published titles, therefore, was maintained in order to meet the needs of the Russian speakers, who, as we have seen above in the census data, made 75% of the population of the country.

The importance of the Russian language and its role of a lingua-franca were regularly stressed in official contexts. Addressing the Fifth Congress of Writers of the USSR in 1971, writer Georgii Markov stated: "In the context of the merge of socialist literatures, the Russian language plays a particularly important role. Almost every important work written in the languages of the sister republics becomes known to the all-Union reader" [Марков: 8]. The statement relates to the role and the wide circulation of Russian language publications in the Soviet Union, as well as to the fact that translations into

Russian regularly served as intermediary texts for further translations into other languages of the Soviet Union. Kazakh writer and translator Aben Satybaldiev described this reality of the Soviet translation, stating that “almost all main literary works of our <i. e. Kazakh> literature have been translated into Russian, and through Russian they are being translated into other world languages” [Сатыбалдиев: 181–182]. Ukrainian poet and translator Mikola Bazhan applied this formula to all national literatures of the Soviet Union, indicating that “in most cases a book written in a language other than Russian enters the world stage due to its Russian translation” [Бажан: 25]. The perspectives described made it natural that most Soviet authors writing in languages other than Russian sought possibilities of getting their works translated into the Russian language.

To an extent, this overall tendency created the effect of reciprocity: the centralized domination of the Russian language was overtly welcome and maintained by representatives of national literature, despite the possible covert resentment. The numerical superiority of the Russian-speaking readership, better perspectives of a literary career, and even a further chance to get one’s works translated into other world languages made it impossible for national writers and literatures to resist the situation. The overall orientation of writers towards the lingua-franca contributed to the actual lowering of the status of national languages and literatures.

Therefore one can assert that the Russian language was not only a lingua franca in the traditional meaning of the term — that is, a chief medium of communication, a common language used by speakers of different language backgrounds [Sridhar: 53]. In the Soviet Union, the Russian language played a special role of a literary lingua franca, a mediator in the communication of literatures and readers. For this reason, the total number of translations (literary and non-literary) into Russian exceeded the total number of translations made into all other languages of the Soviet Union. The following chart lists the main fifteen languages of the Soviet republics and the number of translations published in each of these languages.

Table 1

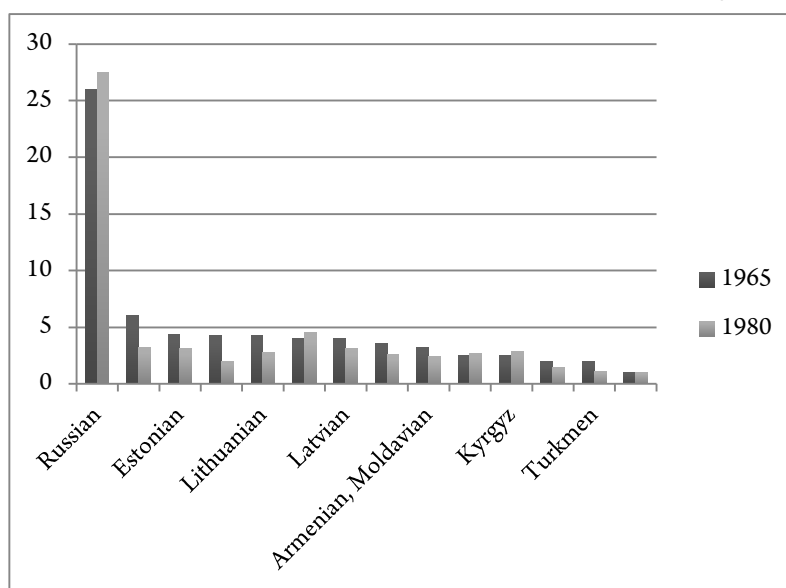
Languages of translation	Number of published translations, 1965 <sup>2</sup>	Number of published translations, 1980 <sup>3</sup>
Total	8 883	8 317
Russian	2 299	2 294
Ukrainian	364	378
Belorussian	85	87
Uzbek	528	271
Kazakh	226	229
Georgian	387	162
Azerbaijan	322	222
Lithuanian	385	233
Moldavian	297	202
Latvian	363	261
Kyrgyz	192	241
Tajik	177	116
Armenian	291	197
Turkmen	174	96
Estonian	389	263

The chart clearly demonstrates the general preference of the Russian language as the prime language for further circulation of texts in the Soviet Union. Thus, for instance, in 1965, when the total number of translated titles in the Soviet Union amounted to 8883, 2299 titles were translated into Russian from 94 languages, which made 26% of all translations. For comparison, the number of translations into Ukrainian that year made 364 titles (4%) from 35 languages, into Lithuanian — 385 (4.3%) from 31 languages, into Estonian — 389 (4.4%) from 23 languages, and from Belorussian — 85 (less than 1%) from 10 languages [Печать СССР 1966: 10]. Similar statistics applies to 1980, with translations into Russian accounting for 27% of all translations, Ukrainian — 4.5%, Lithuanian — 2.8%, Estonian — 3.1%, Belorussian — 1% [Печать СССР 1981: 24]. As one can see, the total number of translated titles decreased by 1980, with an unsubstantial increase in numbers in the case of the Russian, Ukrainian and Kyrgyz translations. The following diagram presents the overall picture more vividly.

<sup>2</sup> [Печать СССР 1966: 10].

<sup>3</sup> [Печать СССР 1981: 24].

Diagram 1



The publishing statistics by each republic makes the domination of the Russian language even more apparent. Such statistics began to be collected and published in the 1970-ies; here, for the sake of clarity, I shall list the data of 1980 [Печать СССР 1981: 140–5]: with goals having been set over two decades before, the year 1980 should have, in theory, shown an increase in the number of translations into the languages of the Soviet Union.

Table 2

Soviet Socialist Republic	Publications in the local national language	Publications in the Russian language	Publications in other languages of the Soviet Union
Ukraine	2 164	6 572	17
Belarussia	370	2 548	1
Uzbekistan	973	1 030	144
Kazakhstan	757	1327	84
Georgia	1 382	564	125
Azerbaijan	793	395	26
Lithuania	1 270	282	–
Moldavia	523	942	3
Latvia	1 118	1341	12
Kyrgyzstan	482	578	14
Tajikistan	261	319	8

Armenia	714	362	10
Turkmenistan	311	349	1
Estonia	1 304	598	2
Russia	45 543		1 150

As one can see from the Table 2, publications in the Russian language in most republics exceeded the number of publications in local national languages, with the exception of Georgia, Azerbaijan, Lithuania, Armenia, and Estonia, who demonstrated a strong preference of local national languages. However, despite the occasional attempts to maintain the status of local languages and literatures, one can assert here, that the term *languages of limited circulation* can be applied to all national languages in the historical context of the Soviet Union. By *languages of limited circulation* I here understand all languages the usage of which is restricted to a certain geographical territory or nationality. Languages of limited circulation therefore may function as the main means of communication within their geographical and social realm, but do not perform a steady function of a lingua franca<sup>4</sup>. In this regard, any language of the Soviet Union apart from Russian can be considered a language of limited circulation.

This overall slant towards the Russian language alone had an adverse effect on the status of national languages and literatures. The effect was enhanced by the centralized approach to the selection of titles and translation methods. The role of national languages was substantially undermined by the way national literatures got represented in translations.

The process of individual selection of authors and works was made in strict accordance with the existing rules and regulations and carefully screened at every stage. Screening of translated literature was done not only at the final stages, when ready translations were studied both first by editors and then by controlling organs, but also on the preliminary stages, when publishers compiled publishing plans, which were then to be approved by Glavlit — the central controlling organ. To compile the publishing plan, publishers needed to get themselves acquainted with lists of works recommended for literary translation in order to bring the publishing plans in line with the officially defined literary course. Official recommendations were an integral part of the Soviet publishing procedure already in the end of the 1930-ies, when special attention started to be paid to the methodology for construction of recommendatory bibliographical reference lists. The purpose of the lists was not only to provide the reader (and, hence, the publisher and the translator) with a list of

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<sup>4</sup> For more on languages of limited circulation (distribution) and the role of national literatures, see, for instance, [Szegedy-Maszák: 5–18].

recommended literature — the ultimate goal pursued in this case was “to create the readership system, to set the courses for it to follow, to define the final result of the reading” [Лауфер: 100]. This means that the final purpose of recommendatory lists was far from being purely educational. Recommendatory lists were not compiled as reading lists; their function was to a great degree manipulative, with the final result of the perspective reading already set and predetermined. Construction of literary bibliographies was directly affected by the regulations on ideology issued by the Central Committee of the Communist party and the requirements they imposed on literature, print, and culture in different years (О журналах «Звезда» и «Ленинград»; О литературно-художественной критике: 524–528; О репертуаре драматических театров; О повышении роли библиотек). Throughout the subsequent decades, arts and literature continued to remain “part of the common cause, important means of communist education and weapons of ideological struggle” [Лауфер: 219]. The consistent fulfillment of the prescriptions and regulations of the Communist party made the Soviet literary bibliography a highly politicized phenomenon “based on *the Communist party principles*<sup>5</sup> in the production and transfer of information and its propaganda” [Трубников: 11].

Lists of recommended works were issued by different organizations and different purposes. To ensure the uniformity of description, I shall here dwell upon the lists issued in one year — namely, 1961. Thus, for instance, the *List of Literary Works of the Literatures of the Nations of the USSR Recommended for Translation into Languages of the Peoples of the USSR* (Список художественных произведений) was compiled as a reference-book for publishers and translators. The distinctive feature of this list is its absolute anonymity both in terms of its compiler and its publisher: the front page bears the name of the location and the year — Moscow, 1961, — leaving the source of publication unknown. The Russian National Library catalogue also describes the publisher as “unidentified” [Catalogue]. This typewritten and further duplicated anonymous document has the structure of a reference book: it lists the names of the recommended authors, the titles of their books, and provides brief summaries of each work.

The listed recommended works are grouped by republic (and, therefore, by source language); the proportion of recommended titles per capita looks quite logical at the first glance, yet careful calculations expose discrepancies. Initially, it would be logical to assume that the number of recommended titles from each republic depended on the population of each republic, that is, that the share of

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<sup>5</sup> Italics as in the original.

the population of each republic per one title recommended for translation into other languages would be more or less equal. However, if we divide the population of each republic by the total number of titles recommended for translation into other languages, it would turn out that the highest density of writers and important works of the Soviet Union was in Armenia (one title per 41 thousand persons) and Estonia (one title per 46 thousand persons), Latvia and Tajikistan followed with one title per 60 thousand persons, then came Turkmenistan (61 thousand) and Kyrgyzstan (64 thousand). At the same time, Ukraine looks quite unprolific — one title per 327 thousand persons; the situation in Moldavia is even worse — one title per 412 thousand persons.

Table 3

Soviet Socialist Republics	Population (census 1959) — in thous. persons <sup>6</sup>	Literature recommended for translation in 1961 (in titles)						Approx. share of population of the republic per one recommended title — in thous. persons
		Prose	Poetry	Plays	Works for children and youth	Anthologies	Total	
Azerbaijan	<b>3 698</b>	23	7	3	-	-	<b>37</b>	<b>100</b>
Armenia	<b>1 763</b>	30	12	1	-	-	<b>43</b>	<b>41</b>
Belorussia	<b>8 056</b>	23	19	2	-	-	<b>44</b>	<b>183</b>
Georgia	<b>4 044</b>	5	7	-	-	-	<b>12</b>	<b>337</b>
Kazakhstan	<b>9 295</b>	17	7	-	-	-	<b>24</b>	<b>387</b>
Kyrgyzstan	<b>2 066</b>	11	21	-	-	-	<b>32</b>	<b>64</b>
Latvia	<b>2 093</b>	13	4	-	18	-	<b>35</b>	<b>60</b>
Lithuania	<b>2 711</b>	12	7	-	5	-	<b>24</b>	<b>113</b>
Moldavia	<b>2 884</b>	7	-	-	-	-	<b>7</b>	<b>412</b>
Tajikistan	<b>1 981</b>	12	21	-	-	-	<b>33</b>	<b>60</b>
Turkmenistan	<b>1 516</b>	10	14	-	1	-	<b>25</b>	<b>61</b>
Uzbekistan	<b>8 119</b>	8	5	1	2	-	<b>16</b>	<b>507</b>
Ukraine	<b>41 869</b>	50	25	33	14	6	<b>128</b>	<b>327</b>
Estonia	<b>1 197</b>	11	-	-	15	-	<b>26</b>	<b>46</b>

Works written in Russian are not included in the list of recommendations, which prompts that translation of Russian works into the languages of the

<sup>6</sup> As listed in census tables, see [Болдырев: 7].



Soviet Union was a matter of course practice which did not require additional incentives.

It is quite apparent that the list was carefully studied by publishers and translators and taken as serious guidelines for the selection of literature. Thus, for example, all eleven works of Estonian writers recommended for adult readers were translated into Russian during the Soviet period. Some of the translations followed the publication of the recommendatory list immediately, like *The Story of Emajõgi* by Luise Vaher [Вахер]. A number of translations of recommended works were published already in 1961, which prompts that the translations of these works were being made or even had already been made by the time the list of recommendations was published. This concerns such works as Hans Leberecht's novel *Palaces of the Vassars*, which was first published in Estonian in 1960, and enjoyed its first translation into Russian in 1961 [Лебепехт]. The same concerns the novel by Ants Saar *There Searched a Man for Happiness*, first published in Estonian in 1958 and almost immediately translated into Russian [Саар], and Osvald Tooming's *The Road Goes through the Woods*, originally published in 1960 and hurriedly translated into Russian by 1961 [Тооминг]. A few works written before 1960 had been translated into Russian before the recommendatory list came out; some of them had already enjoyed two translations, like the first part of *The Windy Coast* by Aadu Hint [Хинт 1952; Хинт 1958]. It is true that the list did not define the Russian language as the primary target language of translation; however, translations into Russian were much more frequent, which is clearly seen from Table 1 and Diagram 1.

Another recommendatory list — *Classic Literatures of the Peoples of the USSR* [Кунина] — was compiled to cater the needs of educational organizations and teachers of literature and literary history. It includes the names and works of literatures of twelve Soviet republics and three autonomous regions (Jewish, Ossetia, and Tatar). Works of the Russian literature are also omitted here, alongside with Moldavian and Kyrgyz literary works. And if the list of classical Russian works is apparently omitted for the reasons mentioned above, it is at first hard to find a satisfactory explanation for the absence of Moldavian and Kyrgyz literature. Indeed, even if the description of Moldavian literature requires a considerable overlap with Romanian literature for the reasons of their common literary history, this should not have been the reason for the exclusion of Moldavia from the list. Considerable overlaps with literatures of other countries were not an impediment for compiling lists of classics of other republics. Thus, for instance, the list of Azerbaijan classics is headed by

the Persian poet Nizami Ganjavi. The Tajik section consists of the works by four poets: Rudaki, Ferdowsi, Omar Khayyam, and Saadi Shirazi, all of whom wrote in Persian. The list of Uzbek literature starts with Ali-Shir Nava'i, who became famous for his poetry in the Chagatai language, as well as in Persian; it is followed by Babur who also wrote in Chagatai. This means that the inclusion of Vasile Alecsandri or Ion Creangă into the Moldavian list would not have contradicted the approach chosen by the compilers of the index. This instant of neglect for Moldavian literature was not a sole one: even two decades later the collective monograph edited by Georgii Lomidze in 1986 stated: "The novel in Moldavia, which was set up in the 1930-ies, started to develop, as we know, in the recent twenty or so years" [Ломидзе: 153]. The comment is disputable, as already in the nineteenth century the Moldavian literature prided in the names of Bogdan Petriceicu Hasdeu and Constantin and Iacob Negruzzi.

The Kyrgyz literature of the nineteenth — beginning of the twentieth century was to a great extent limited to folklore [Эралиев: 362]; however, it also has its heroes like the akyn Moldo Kylych. The compilers, however, chose to omit Kyrgyz and Moldavian literature completely. This neglect goes contrary to the approach of equality of nations and literatures, which was also referred to by the compilers in the introduction to the index, where they spoke about the October revolution, which had created conditions for the wide circulation of national literatures "regardless the language they were written in" [Кунина: 3].

The choice of some classics over others in the index is also worth mentioning here. The selection of works of national classics at times demonstrates a clear slant towards the official party policy. This concerns, for instance, the works of such important classics of the Lithuanian literature as Maironis and Juozas Tumas-Vaižgantas, neither of whom was mentioned in the index. One of the most famous Lithuanian poets, Maironis (born Jonas Mačiulis, 1862–1932) was a Catholic priest, a graduate of St. Petersburg Catholic Theological Academy and a rector of Kaunas Priest Seminary. Already during his lifetime, Maironis was labeled "a proponent of bourgeois-nationalist ideology" [Литературная энциклопедия: 704]. As the author of romantic works on medieval subjects, Maironis also received uncomplimentary characteristics of literary officials. "In the context of the "independent" republic of Lithuania," went the Literary Encyclopedia in 1932, "these works proclaim monarchy, which is so much favored by many bourgeois-landowning circles of modern Lithuanian national-fascists, and therefore have a distinct reactionary nature" [Ibid.: 705]. Despite such unflattering descriptions, works by Maironis twice appeared in Russian translations in the Soviet Union in large circulations.

In 1948 and 1949 collected works of Maironis were published by *Goslitzdat* in 10 000 copies each year [Майронис 1948; Майронис 1949]. Direct recommendations for further publications were not found possible.

Writer Juozas Tumas (1869–1933), who was known under the pen-name of Vaižgantas, was also a Catholic priest, a rector of the Vytautas Magnus Church in Kaunas, and a social activist. Widely known and published in Lithuania, he remained virtually unknown to the Russian readers, with the novella *Little Fools' Tears* published in the collection of Lithuanian prose in 1948 [Вайжган-тас: 32–39]. The next Russian publication of Vaižgantas came twenty years later, when his novel “Uncles and Aunts” was published 1968 by a Lithuanian publisher [Тумас]. Neither Maironis, nor Vaižgantas were listed among the Lithuanian classics, despite the fact they were considered to be so in their home land. The Lithuanian list of classics in 1961 was limited to Žemaitė (Julija Beniuševičiūtė-Žymantienė) and Julius Janonis, both of whom had a more “appropriate” biography and literary subjects, the first being a peasant poet, the latter — a revolutionary activist and a Bolshevik.

Misrepresentation of national literatures in bibliographies, indexes, recommendatory lists, and, therefore, literary translations presented a serious problem, as it interfered with the very notion of equality and brotherhood of nations. This fact was pointed out, albeit in passing, by the Balkar poet Kaisyn Kuliev.

There is one problem, which critics barely touch upon: *what to translate*<sup>7</sup> into the Russian language from the languages of peoples of our country. I think this question one of the most important, when it goes about literary translation, and it must be solved in the first instance. How to translate is very important. It is much spoken and written about, but what to translate — this is what we usually keep silence about. Quite often one translates such books, which might have played some role in their young literature, in a formative stage, but they do not tell a thing to the Soviet reader; these are things without literary value [Кулиев: 383].

What is also notable in Kuliev’s comment is, again, the reference to the Russian language as the main target language. By the date of publication of Kuliev’s article in 1973, the unique status of the Russian language among the national languages of the country had been firmly established, and the Russian language continued to be used as a literary intermediate, the translations into Russian enjoying wide circulation and big readership. The comparatively lower status of the national languages of the Soviet Union, alongside with the Iron Curtain effect, which consisted in the increased curiosity in the literatures of the

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<sup>7</sup> Author’s italics.

unknown, made the majority of Russian literary translators seek to translate literatures written in major European languages: English, French, German, and Spanish. Yet getting commissioned to these translations required experience and a substantial record of published literary translations, which younger translators did not have. This is why young Soviet translators actively engaged in translating poetry of the nations of the Soviet Union and the Communist bloc, hoping that once they are noticed, they would be getting commissions to works of “bigger” literatures. The lack of language command was not considered an impediment, because the Soviet literary system completely justified the use of interlinear trots in translating poetry. Interlinear trots — prosaic word for word translations of the original verse — were used to create translated poetry by poet-translators who were unfamiliar with the originals and their languages<sup>8</sup>.

The use of interlinear trots in translating poetry was a practice well familiar to translators and publishers of the Russian Empire, which was naturally taken over by the Soviet literature. The heightening of interest towards interlinear trots in the Soviet Union was determined by the shift in the role of literature, which was supposed to serve public purposes, including education. In context of this high demand for new literary texts, interlinear trots were considered useful: they were a way to introduce the readers to the variety of national literatures and a means of education of a new generation of well-qualified literary translators who, upon learning the language while translating from the interlinear trot, would later be able to translate from the original, too [Россельс: 45–46].

Let us take a look at the table of contents of the volume of Estonian poetry of the nineteenth century published in Leningrad in 1961 [Руммо]. The book contains 454 poems by 20 Estonian poets translated into Russian by 42 translators. The anthology was compiled by an Estonian — namely, the Estonian writer and poet Paul Rummo (1909–1981); he also wrote the foreword and commentaries for the volume. Another Estonian who took part in compiling the anthology was poet Leon Toom, who co-edited the translations of the volume together with the well-known and highly respected Russian poet and translator Pavel Antokol'skii. The anthology includes translations made by Toom — namely, 41 out of 100 poems by Juhan Liiv and one out of 13 poems by Jakob Liiv included in the volume. The third Estonian speaker is Yuri Shumakov, a graduate of Tartu University and a famous translator of Estonian poetry, whose translations of two poems by Mihkel Veske are included in the

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<sup>8</sup> For more detail about the earlier history and status of interlinear trots see: [Witt].

volume. Rummo, who did not translate for the volume, and Toom and Shumakov, who both made their contributions into the volume as translators, are the only people whose knowledge of Estonian cannot be questioned. Another name is David Samoilov, who would move to Estonia 13 years later in 1974, and who might have been familiar with some Estonian in the beginning of the 1960-ies. There are also four translations by poet Igor Severianin, who moved from the Soviet Russia to Estonia in 1918 and remained its resident till his death in 1941. Other translators, in all probability, resorted to interlinear trots. Poet Vsevolod Rozhdestvenskii is known to have spoken and translated French, Svetlana Evseeva, Bronislav Kezhun, Vsevolod Azarov were original poets, Anatolii Chevelikhin was a poet and a journalist, Vladimir Derzhavin, Aleksandr Kochetkov, and Dmitrii Levonevskii were translators but did not know Estonian, poet and translator Vladimir Kornilov did not speak Estonian, and Dr. Efim Etkind — a distinguished scholar and a translator — spoke English, French, and German, but, again, not Estonian. Among other poet-translators for the volume were such well-known poets and translators as Ariadna Efron, Mikhail Svetlov, Maria Petrovykh, who are known to have worked a lot with interlinear trots. This means that out of 42 translators no more than four spoke Estonian well, therefore three quarters of the anthology was translated via interlinear trots.

One cannot but point out that the inclusion of such political personae non-grata as Yurii Shumakov and Igor Severianin (two and four translations respectively) was a great risk taken by editors Rummo, Antokol'skii, and Toom. One being a former political prisoner, the other — an emigrant and a decadent, Shumakov and Severianin could be included only in such big collections of poetry, where their names could pass the censor unnoticed in the extensive table of contents, which occupies twelve pages of the anthology. Such inclusions of politically inconvenient names into large poetry collections was a regular practice of Soviet anthologists in the 1960–1980-ies.

The employment of interlinear trots gradually turned from a temporary measure into a routine, which did not meet much opposition on the behalf of national writers. Quite on the contrary, their criticism mainly referred to the quality of interlinear trots or the final results, but not to the interlinear translation methodology as such. Within one single collection of articles published in 1973, one can find expressions of hope that interlinear trots should further be prepared by better qualified specialists [Мамедов: 188], complaints that some translations from national literatures were unable to meet modern requirements [Сатыбалдиев: 182], or wishes for closer cooperation of national authors with their translators working with interlinear trots, for

“the author will not allow the translator to deviate from the original text” [Эралиев: 372].

Such author — translator cooperation, indeed, took place regularly. Close cooperation of translators and authors sometimes grew into friendship and gave life to volumes of works of national poetries published in Russian translations. This concerns the collaborative work of the Russian translator Mikhail Yasnov with the Moldavian poet Paul Mihnea and the Nenets poet Leonid Laptui and of the Russian translator Viktor Andreev with the Yiddish-writing poet Khaim Beider. Yasnov’s translations of Mihnea’s poetry were published widely: thus, for instance, in 1975, twenty-six translations by the twenty-nine-year-old Yasnov were published in the collection of Mihnea’s poetry alongside with the translations of older and better known colleagues [Михня]. But however fruitful individual cases of author-translator cooperation might have been, it is quite obvious, that the national poets were willing, or, at least, did not mind placing their works in the hands of translators who could not read the original.

From this perspective, the general literary tendency in the Soviet Union can be described as the gradual construction of a new literary and linguistic identity. Historic domination of the Russian language as the target language of translations was further maintained as a lingua-franca and the binding element for the peoples of the Soviet Union. Since language, in Szegedy-Maszák’s definition, “stands for the collective memory that creates an imagined community” [Szegedy-Maszák: 13], domination of a single language in translation contributes to the construction of a potentially new community with different collective memories of both emotional and linguistic nature. The steady movement of the state towards a well-structured and well-subordinated society required a similar consolidation on the level of the language, literature, and, therefore, translation. This is why the initial plans of increasing the share of translations into national literatures were gradually erased from the common memory. At the same time, the demand for translations into Russian remained strong in the national languages of the Soviet Union, as translation in the disparate linguistic context, in Szegedy-Maszák definition, ensures “a better chance for survival” [Ibid.: 15]. The word *survival* here can be applied both to national literatures of the Soviet Union and to individual cases of living writers and poets, who naturally sought recognition by a wider readership. The seemingly free choice of representatives of national literatures to be translated into Russian was, as the famous quote goes, a consciousness of necessity, a way of ensuring a literary future in the given circumstances. This required their

coming to terms with the literary approaches and methods applied to translations, as well as being referred to as “writers of sister republics”, that is, being labeled as representatives of “minor” literatures. The alternative to this conscious decision was remaining restricted to the national language readership and, given the number of readers, eventually falling into oblivion. With the Russian readership in the country amounting to 75%, the translation situation in the Soviet Union was almost impossible to fight. Therefore, the steady advancement of the Russian language in literature and translation was a centralized process which developed with a yielded consent of individuals — writers, poets, and translators — who were solving their everyday creative tasks.

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