

TRANSLATED LITERATURE AS SOFT PROPAGANDA: EXAMPLES FROM OCCUPIED NORWAY (1940-1945)

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ABSTRACT: Among the cultural fields censored under the Nazi rule of occupied Norway (1940-1945) during WWII, translated literature stands out as the most strictly controlled part of the literary field, censored by the Norwegian Literature and Library Office. Moreover, the Reich Commissariat (the highest German authority in occupied Norway) used the field of translated literature as a site for soft propaganda, here understood as subtle messaging, in contrast to hard propaganda, which is cruder and more heavy-handed. Aiming to investigate how the Reich Commissariat influenced the field of translated literature, this article presents findings from archival research focused on correspondence directly or indirectly involving the Reich Commissariat, taking into consideration textual and contextual features of the books and authors discussed. The article concludes that the Reich Commissariat had various ways of influencing publications of translated literature, being both overtly and covertly involved in publishing processes.

KEYWORDS: Soft Propaganda, Censorship, Translation under Occupation, Translation Policies, Occupied Norway

1. Introduction

On April 9, 1940, Nazi German forces invaded Norway. The country remained occupied for five years until its liberation on May 8, 1945. During the occupation, the highest-ranking German authority in the country was Josef Terboven, appointed “Reich Commissary for the Occupied Norwegian Territories” by Adolf Hitler on April 24, 1940.¹ Terboven’s organization was called the Reichskommissariat (the Reich Commissariat, henceforth RC) and had departments for administration, the national economy, technology, and popular enlightenment and propaganda.² The latter encompassed most fields of propaganda, such as sports, education, media, arts, and literature. The RC’s departments supervised and controlled the corresponding departments of Vidkun Quisling’s Norwegian Nazi government, which had its own ministries governing overlapping fields. Hence, the literary field was not only under the RC’s scrutiny; it was also controlled by the Ministry of Culture and Public Education, specifically its sub-department for literature, the Literature and Library Office (henceforth LLO).³

The LLO’s control is most commonly understood as operating through the post-publication censoring of national literature. However, while publishing houses managed to avoid a stricter regime of pre-publication censorship for national literature (Ringdal, 1995, pp. 122-123), the LLO did manage to instate pre-publication censorship for translated literature. This regulation meant that publishers were obliged to seek permission from the

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¹ In German: Reichskommissar für die besetzten norwegischen Gebiete. All translations into English are mine.

² Title of departments in German: Hauptabteilung Verwaltung, Hauptabteilung Volkswirtschaft, Hauptabteilung Technik, Hauptabteilung Volksaufklärung und Propaganda.

³ In Norwegian: Kultur- og folkeopplysningsdepartementet; Litteratur- og bibliotekkontoret.

LLO for each foreign book they wanted to publish (Formo, 1998; see also Solberg, 2018; Solberg, forthcoming). The remaining LLO archives show that the development and implementation of this regulation happened under the RC's influence (Solberg, forthcoming) and that the Commissariat's literary branch played a more active role in the field of translated literature than previously acknowledged.

This article focuses on how the field of translated literature was controlled in ways that go beyond basic censorship, shedding new light on how the RC influenced and encouraged the LLO and publishers of translated literature. It furthermore shows that the LLO and the publishers themselves often initiated contact with the RC on different matters. The findings from the LLO's archives analyzed in the present article are thus categorized according to participants and direction of communication:

- I. The RC contacts a publisher with a suggestion for a publication for which the publisher then applies to the LLO for permission to publish.
- II. The RC contacts the LLO with a suggestion for publication for a Norwegian publishing house.
- III. A publisher contacts the RC, seeking approval for the publication of a certain book before applying to the LLO for publishing permission.
- IV. The LLO contacts the RC with questions or information about an application from a publisher.

By investigating the various ways in which the RC was involved in publication processes, this article aims to fine-tune our understanding of how the field of translated literature in occupied Norway was controlled, and to show how it was used by the RC as a site for soft propaganda (Huang, 2018; see also section 2).

In the next section, the notions of soft propaganda and hard propaganda are presented and related to two competing views on propaganda in Nazi Germany. The following sections describe the archival material and methodology used in the study, before presenting, analyzing and discussing cases illustrating the four above-mentioned categories of communication.

2. Theoretical, contextual and historical backdrop

When it comes to the control of a cultural field, such as the field of translated literature, one can distinguish between censorship, on the one hand, and propaganda, on the other. Censorship can be described as the act of removing "unwanted" elements – be it parts of or entire works – while propaganda is the act of adding "wanted" elements, through more or less bombastic messages, with the aim of convincing the receiving public of an ideological position. We can further distinguish between *hard propaganda* and *soft propaganda*. Huang (2018) describes soft propaganda as a sleeker and subtler type of message than what is conveyed with hard propaganda. Receivers of soft propaganda may not realize that the message they perceive is propaganda, although the intended effect of the message is to alter the attitudes or convictions of its audience. Somewhat simplistically, one can perhaps say that soft propaganda is propaganda that does not present itself as

such; its mission is covert, and therein lies its strength. Huang (2018, p. 1034) states that hard propaganda may backfire due to its being “crude and heavy-handed”, since that may create resistance in the population. Soft propaganda might thus be more efficient in influencing the receivers’ political and social attitudes.

This distinction was known to the Nazi German authorities in charge of propaganda. According to Barbian (2013, p. 102), there were competing views on the matter of propaganda between the German Foreign Office and the then newly established Reich Ministry of Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda already by 1933. In the Foreign Office’s view, the work for German culture abroad “did not (...) involve ‘propaganda’ in the traditional sense” but a “scrupulous observation of the mood toward Germany abroad” (Memorandum “Cultural Policy”, 1 March 1933, cited in Barbian, 2013, p. 102). In a memorandum from 30 November 1940, the Foreign Office’s and the Propaganda Ministry’s approaches to literature abroad are further compared, cited here in Barbian’s words (2013, p. 104):

[It] compared the Propaganda Ministry’s understanding of “cultural propaganda” to the feverish activity of an itinerant preacher or a missionary. Whereas the Propaganda Ministry “always tries to set up large, prestigious events,” the Foreign Office puts its faith in “tenacious, quiet, and well-camouflaged propaganda and cultural work,” aiming to create a positive attitude toward cultural events among the foreign country’s population.

In the context of translated literature in occupied Norway, one can see that both methods were applied. There were, on the one hand, publishing houses openly collaborating with Nazi authorities, publishing hard propaganda requested by the Nazi party or the RC. On the other hand, as we shall see below, there were publishers – both openly collaborative ones as well as “neutral” ones – publishing works requested from them, either directly by the RC or indirectly via the LLO acting on orders from the RC. Whereas only the first group of publishers can be said to be instrumental for hard propaganda in the form of literature, both groups were instrumental for the publication of soft propaganda in literary form. Translation seems to have been central to soft propaganda, since literary translations were a way of disseminating German literature abroad and of spreading ideas and views that the authorities adhered to. The field of translated literature in Norway was furthermore vulnerable to control of this sort because of strict regulation, which included costly pre-publication censorship (cf. Formo, 1998; Solberg, 2018; Solberg, forthcoming). Publishing what the RC wanted would in this context be a way of being guaranteed permission to publish.

An expression of the RC’s view on translation and translated literature may be found in *Norwegische Bibliographie. Die Bücher des Jahres 1942*, a 1943 compilation by Fritz Meyen, with a foreword by Alfred Huhnhäuser. Both worked at the RC; Meyen was in charge of literature at the RC’s department for popular enlightenment and propaganda, alongside Heinz Finke, who corresponded with publishers and the LLO (Ringdal, 1995, p. 108; Solberg, forthcoming). Huhnhäuser was the Ministerial councilor of the RC’s School

department.⁴ In addition to giving an overview of books from or about Germany published in Norway in 1942 and vice versa, the bibliography contains four parts covering the previous (1) Norwegian translations of German literature from 1814 to 1941, (2) German translations of Norwegian literature from 1730 to 1941, (3) Norwegian books about Germany from 1814 to 1941, and (4) German books about Norway from the same period.

In his introduction to the bibliography, Huhnhäuser complains about what he believes to be an imbalance in the German-Norwegian cultural exchange. He describes how the Norwegian book market was influenced by and connected to Great Britain in the years before WWII, and claims there was a negative attitude towards Germany because of what “Jews and communists have said” about the country (Huhnhäuser, 1943, pp. 5-6).⁵ He writes that German literature in Norway before the war “showed a Germany that had long been a thing of the past” (p. 6),⁶ and states that most of that literature “belongs to the type of writing that is forbidden in Germany” (p. 9).⁷ Furthermore, he makes the accusation that since 1933 “German literature is increasingly represented by non-Germans [*Nichtdeutschblütige*: “those not of German blood”] and opponents of the new Germany” (p. 7),⁸ and he finds Germany to be “very neglected” in libraries (p. 5).⁹

As an example of the British presence and influence in Norwegian literature before the war, Huhnhäuser presents the case of a cheap world atlas that had been produced in England and therefore focused precisely on England (11 pages for England, one page for Germany). His interpretation is that “nothing can explain the connection between England and Norway at the time better than this atlas” (Huhnhäuser, 1943, p. 6).¹⁰ As a result of the Norwegian-British connection demonstrated by the atlas, he claims, “one saw Germany through the eyes of the English, and then formed one’s judgment” (p. 6).¹¹

Huhnhäuser (1943, p. 5) points out that the public libraries ought to be able to show the intellectual capacities of a foreign country, but that that would require the local publishers to have provided “the necessary literature, especially in the form of translations”.¹² On this note, he later adds that “the libraries [in Norway] bought what the publishers offered them” and that these publishers were “little interested in German things and, with their production of post-war German literature, they gave an image of a non-

⁴ In German: Schulabteilung; sometimes also Abteilung Schul- und Bildungswesen.

⁵ Source text (ST): “Juden und Kommunisten haben uns von Deutschland erzählt”.

⁶ ST: “zeigte ein Deutschland, das längst der Vergangenheit angehörte”.

⁷ ST: “denn abgesehen von den seit 1940 erschienenen Büchern gehört das meiste zu dem in Deutschland verbotenen Schrifttum”.

⁸ ST: “vom Weltkrieg an und besonders seit 1933 das deutsche Schrifttum in immer zunehmendem Masse durch Nichtdeutschblütige und Gegner des neuen Deutschland vertreten wird”.

⁹ ST: “sehr stark vernachlässigt war”.

¹⁰ ST: “Nichts kann wohl besser die damalige Verknüpfung Norwegens mit England erläutern als gerade dieser Atlas”.

¹¹ ST: “Man sah Deutschland durch die englische Brille und bildete sich danach sein Urteil”.

¹² ST: “Voraussetzung dafür ist allerdings, dass die einheimischen Verlage durch Bereitstellung der notwendigen Literatur vor allem in Gestalt von Übersetzungen die erforderlichen Brücken geschlagen haben.”

existent Germany, or a Germany disfigured by hatred” (p. 6).¹³ The importance Huhnhäuser attributes to translation, as a means of either strengthening the bonds between peoples and cultures or as a way of ignoring or misrepresenting a country, is telling, and provides a backdrop against which we can analyze the RC’s involvement in the publication of translated literature in occupied Norway.

3. Material and method

The main source for this investigation into the RC’s role in the field of translated literature in occupied Norway was the archival material left behind from the LLO. It is kept in Norway’s National Archives, specifically series 3415, box 76, which, among other things, contains a file with applications for the publication of translated literature. Sadly, these records are not complete. Many of the documents have been lost; some were destroyed just before the capitulation, while others were lost in the years after the occupation, when the archive was used as a source of information for the subsequent trials. However, those that remain still show there was contact, cooperation and communication between the RC and the LLO, and between the RC and publishers.

Research into what remains of the RC archives has not yielded any fruitful results relevant to this matter, and thus the primary source to all of the findings presented here is the LLO archive. It is not unlikely that there will have been more instances of RC involvement than what is found in the archives, and – looking back at what was published during the occupation – one might speculate about what publications were the results of such involvement. Yet, the LLO archives are the only source of documented instances of the RC influencing publications of translated literature in occupied Norway.

As regards the methodology, the material was first cataloged, and all correspondence that directly involved the RC or otherwise referred to the RC’s involvement was sorted according to the above-mentioned categories. The correspondence was then analyzed in light of its nature and its relation to the books and authors in question, as well as the ideological implications of these works and the RC’s opinions in each case.

4. Analyses of four cases

Although the LLO archives do not contain any correspondence going directly from the RC to publishers or vice versa, it is still possible to find traces of such correspondence. One of the ways in which this evidence presents itself is when a publisher uses their contacts with the RC in the application to the LLO for permission to publish a certain book. As briefly mentioned above and more elaborately described in Solberg (forthcoming), the LLO was in charge of the pre-publication censorship of all translated literature during the occupation. The publisher would thus send an initial application containing the name of the author and the name and address of the translator, the title of the book and the number of copies to

¹³ ST: “Die Büchereien aber kauften, was die Verleger ihnen boten. Diese waren an deutschen Dingen nur wenig interessiert und gaben durch ihre Produktion des deutschen Nachkriegsschrifttums ein Bild eines nicht vorhandenen oder eines durch Hass entstellten Deutschland.”

be printed, as well as a sales budget and the permit from the foreign publisher. If the preliminary permit was granted, the publisher would then have the work translated before they could send it to the LLO for final approval. Applications for the preliminary permit sometimes included more than the required information. Some described the work in more detail, highlighting what might please the censors (Solberg, forthcoming). Some would attach recommendations, and yet others would mention that the RC had contacted them regarding the book they were now applying for the permission to publish.

4.1 Category I: The RC contacts a publisher. Case: *Amaryll* by Otto Voigtel

One of the publishing houses that mentioned the RC's involvement in their application for preliminary permission was the medium-sized Nasjonalforlaget. On March 3, 1942 they applied for the permit to publish *Amaryll*, by Otto Voigtel. The publishing house wrote that the RC had sent them the book and that this was why they wanted to publish it (application signed 3 March, 1942).¹⁴ According to Meyen's *Norwegische Bibliographie*, Voigtel was born on October 28, 1912 (Meyen, 1943, p. 18). Apart from this, there is no other information about him to be found in Norwegian sources; this was his only book published in Norway.

Amaryll is a romantic novella of about 100 pages, described by a newspaper as "one of this year's books for young girls" ('Høstens bøker', 1942, p. 3).¹⁵ The book presents the dentist Dietrich Lorenz, who lives in Berlin but has a strong attraction towards nature and the outdoors. It is 1939; Dietrich is 26 years old and engaged to Christa, a wise and reliable woman who during the course of the book gives Dietrich permission to be with Lore, a young girl whom he calls Amaryll. Dietrich first meets 17-year-old Lore on one of his hikes. He falls in love at once although she ignores him, asks him to go away whenever he follows her around, and in general tries to make herself unlikable in his eyes – but to no avail. He insists on spending time with her, writes to her and befriends the family she works for. When war breaks out, Dietrich is called to the front, but comes back for a short visit on leave. At this point Dietrich kisses Lore, and her feelings suddenly start to change. When he leaves for the front, she writes to him for the first time. His reply is signed "Your soldier" (Voigtel, 1942, p. 99).¹⁶ She then writes to him again proclaiming her love and her desire to "become a real woman some time, and have children" (p. 101),¹⁷ but the letter does not reach the front before he dies during combat in France.

Although there are obvious ideological undertones to this book, it is not hard propaganda; it does not paint direct or crude images of an enemy or attitude. Nor does it try to impose, in an overt and direct manner, its view on the readers to win them over, but the fact that the RC took the initiative to suggest the title means that the publication needs

¹⁴ In the application, Knut Bach is mentioned as the translator, but in the published book as well as in Meyen's bibliography, the translator is said to be Mimi von Krogh (quite possibly a pseudonym).

¹⁵ ST: "En av årets ungpikébøker".

¹⁶ This and the following quote from *Amaryll* are translations into English from the Norwegian target text (TT): "Din soldat".

¹⁷ Norwegian TT: "bli en virkelig kvinne noen gang, og få barn".

to be evaluated with its potential propaganda function in mind. What value could the RC have seen in *Amaryll*? The book represents German heroism packaged in a short novella about romance, written in a light and melodramatic style. Its intended readership would be young heterosexual women and girls, who, if the publication “succeeded”, would develop sympathies and positive feelings for Dietrich, the brave romantic hero of the story. Whether or not the RC intended it, it is also possible to read *Amaryll* more metaphorically, with Lore representing the occupied territory, Dietrich the occupier, and Dietrich’s persistence when Lore tries to reject him as a symbol of German persistence in occupying Norway despite being disliked and unwanted by the majority of the population. The goal, in any case, seems to be to create sympathy for a German soldier – an effect that hard propaganda could scarcely obtain, since any attempt at it would risk backfiring (cf. Huang, 2018).

It is also interesting to notice how the book was presented to the public. A note about *Amaryll* in the press claims that the “young author” had had “a remarkable breakthrough in all of Europe” with *Amaryll* (*Amaryll*, 1942, p. 4).¹⁸ There is, however, no evidence of any such thing. Indeed, the book does not seem to have been translated into any language other than Norwegian.¹⁹ The statement is probably best understood as another element of this publication’s function as soft propaganda: it seems intended to create enthusiasm for the publication, thus paving the way for the work’s propaganda function.

4.2 Category II: The RC contacts the LLO. Case: The people of the abyss by Jack London

On February 11, 1942, Heinz Finke at the RC sent a letter to the LLO: “Since [*The people of the abyss*] represents the slum areas of London and the life of the people living there in a very vivid and drastic way, and since one can assume there will be strong interest in the book due to the author’s popularity, I would like to suggest that you ask Gyldendal publishing house to publish a new edition of the work”.²⁰ Gyldendal had published *The people of the abyss* (London, 1903) under the title *Avgrunnens folk* (Inge Debes’ translation) as part of a 12-volume series in 1934-1936.²¹ As a result of the RC’s suggestion, the LLO

¹⁸ ST: “et bemerkelsesverdige gjennombrudd i hele Europa”.

¹⁹ Searches in the *Index Translationum* as well as in the national libraries of Denmark, Holland, Italy, Spain, and France produced no findings, and in the German National Library, the Norwegian translation of *Amaryll* is the only translation that comes up.

²⁰ ST: “Da dies Buch in einer sehr anschaulichen und drastischen Weise die Elendsquartiere Londons darstellt und das Leben der darin wohnenden Meschen, und ausserdem bei der Beliebtheit des Verfassers ein starkes Interesse für das Buch anzunehmen ist, möchte ich Ihnen nahelegen, den Gyldendal-Verlag aufzufordern, eine Neuauflage des Werkes herauszubringen”.

²¹ The series contained translations into Norwegian of *A daughter of the snows I-II* (*Sneens datter I-II*, transl. Ben Horne; see London, 1935b, 1935c), *The abysmal brute* (*Bokseren*, transl. John Grieg-Müller; see London, 1935d), *Burning daylight* (*En klondykehelt*, transl. Nordahl Grieg; see London, 1934), (parts of) *Smoke Bellew tales* (*Hvor gullfeberen raser*, transl. Gunnar Reiss-Andersen; see London, 1935e), *Adventure* (*På eventyr*, transl. John Grieg-Müller; see London, 1935f), *Hearts of three I-II* (*Tre hjerter I-II*, transl. Theodor Berge; see London, 1935g, 1935h), (other parts of) *Smoke Bellew tales* (*Det store vidunder*, transl. Gunnar Reiss-Andersen; see London, 1936), *The people of the abyss* (*Avgrunnens folk*, transl. Inge Debes; see London, 1935a), *Michael, brother of Jerry* (*Michael*, transl. Ben Horne; see London, 1935i) and *John Barleycorn* (*Kong Alkohol*, transl. Odd Hølaas; see London, 1935j).

sent a letter to Gyldendal, requesting a new edition of the book. The publishing manager Harald Grieg had been arrested (Ringdal, 1995, p. 113), so it was the acting publishing manager, Frits von der Lippe, who responded. He referred to rations and lack of materials, stating that they would only publish a new edition when “the paper and bookbinding situation” would allow the publication of the entire series (letter signed 7 March, 1942).²² In May, after Gyldendal had been put under the commissioned management of the Nazi-friendly author Knut Hamsun’s son, Tore Hamsun, they applied for permission to print the series (application signed 26 May, 1942). The application was approved and the series came out in 1943.

Jack London (1876-1916) is best known and remembered for his wilderness and adventure stories (Berliner, 2008, p. 56), but in 1902 he spent six weeks in London’s East End, where he took on the identity of an American sailor and lived among extremely poor people. In the first chapter of the book, he describes in an adventure-like style how he enters the area, which he dubs “the end of the world”,²³ dressed in old clothes to blend in (London, 1935a, pp. 11-14). Over the 200 or so following pages, London paints a horrendous picture of life in the East End, supported by accounts from the people he met in workhouses and food lines, on benches at night, quoting figures and statistics of the economic situation of the people living there taken from the news.

What he describes is a desperate situation for the people in the East End, but he is very explicit in his claim that the situation is dire in all of England (London, 1935a, p. 195, emphasis in the original): “This must be clearly understood: *Everything that is true of London with regard to poverty and decay is true of all England.* (...) The frightful conditions making London a hell also make the United Kingdom a hell”.²⁴ The “hell” he is referring to is also presented in devastating numbers (London, 1935a, p. 163): “One in every four persons in London dies on public charity, and 939 out of every 1000 on the British Isles die in poverty.”²⁵ Poverty results in hunger, a central theme in London’s account (London, 1935a, p. 196): “From the entire country the cry of hunger rises, from the Ghetto and the countryside, from prisons and dormitories, from asylums and workhouses”.²⁶

As an American socialist at the turn of the century, London was making use of the terminology and theoretical framework provided by Charles Darwin (Berliner, 2008, p. 55). According to Berliner, with regard to the theory of natural selection, “London wanted to have it both ways. He supported Weismann’s rejection of hereditary transmission of

²² ST: “når papir- og innbindingssituasjonen tillater det”.

²³ This and the following quotes from *The people of the abyss* are back-translations into English from the Norwegian TT: “verdens ende”.

²⁴ Norwegian TT: “En må holde sig klart for øie: *Alt det som gjelder for London med hensyn til fattigdom og forfall, gjelder hele England.* (...) De fryktelige forholdene som gjør London til et helvete, gjør også Det forente kongerike til et helvete”. The back-translations of London’s work are in part based on the English text, but adjusted in order to render the word choices and expressions used in the Norwegian translation.

²⁵ Norwegian TT: “Hvert fjerde menneske i London dør på forsorgen, og 939 av hvert tusen på De Britiske øer dør i fattigdom”.

²⁶ Norwegian TT: “Fra hele landet reiser hungerskrieket sig, fra ghettoen og landsbygden, fra fengsel og herberge, fra asyl og arbeidsanstalter”.

acquired characteristics, but he also argued that the city breeds new species in only a few generations” (Berliner, 2008, p. 60). An example comes early on in the Norwegian version of *The people of the abyss* (London, 1935a, p. 10): “The streets were full of a new and different human race, short, lost and beer-sodden”.²⁷ London returns to this idea of “a new race” several times. According to London, an effect of this, which may have interested the RC in 1942, is that the British people, because of their poverty, would not be able to serve their country (London, 1935a, p. 152): “Brutalized, broken, and dull, the people of the Ghetto will be unable to render to England the necessary service in the world struggle for industrial supremacy which economists declare has already begun. Neither as workers nor as soldiers can they hold up when England, in her need, calls upon them”.²⁸

Central to London’s exposé is his critique of the English authorities, those in power, whom he accuses of “MISMANAGEMENT” (London, 1935a, p. 206).²⁹ It seems he cannot see any way for Britain’s government to turn things around (London, 1935a, p. 208): “the political empire to which they belong by name is perishing. The political machine known as the British Empire is done. In the hands of its current management it is losing power every day”.³⁰ And the solution: “In short, society must be reorganized, and a capable management must be put at the head”³¹ (London, 1935a, p. 208).

The RC’s eagerness to have the book published in a new edition seems paradoxical at first sight. London was an American and a socialist, and his works had been blacklisted in Nazi Germany since 1933 (Barbian, 2019, p. 242). However, Barbian (2013, p. 364) points to the fact that even the book club Büchergilde Gutenberg distributed a 12-volume series of Jack London’s works in Nazi Germany, possibly also including *The people of the abyss* (translated by Erwin Magnus as *Menschen der Tiefe* in 1928). Arguably, there are reasons for the RC to *not* want the book to be re-published, but it seems that the grim picture the author paints of London and England weighed heavier than his American identity and socialist leanings.

This case shows the RC working behind the scenes, initiating a new edition of London’s story, without being in direct contact with the publisher. The importance of this book as soft propaganda is enforced by the fact that the RC’s involvement was invisible to the publisher. The author’s position as “unwanted” in Germany, as well as his supposed popularity in Norway, may also be seen as adding to the persuasive power of the text.

²⁷ Norwegian TT: “Gatene var fulle av en ny og annen menneskerase, små, forkomne og ølkvapsete”.

²⁸ Norwegian TT: “Forråede, ødelagte og dvaske, vil ghettoens folk være ute av stand til å yde England den fornødne støtte i den verdenskamp om overherredømmet innen industrien, som statsøkonomene erklærer alt er begynt. Hverken som arbeidere eller soldater vil de holde mål, når England kaller på dem i sin nød”.

²⁹ Norwegian TT: “VANSTYRE”.

³⁰ Norwegian TT: “det politiske riket som de i navnet tilhører, går til grunne. Det politiske maskineriet som kalles Det britiske riket er ferdig. I hendene på det nuværende styre taper det i kraft for hver dag”.

³¹ Norwegian TT: “Kort, samfundet må bli omorganisert, og det må settes en duelig styre i spissen”.

4.3 Category III: A publisher contacts the RC. Case: Der schwarze Hengst Bento by Ditha Holesch

In some cases, publishers contacted the RC about works they wanted to publish. In most of these cases, the correspondence between publisher and the RC has been lost, but traces of their contact may be found in the LLO's archive. It is typical that when publishers have obtained the RC's approval for a translation, they do not hold back that information in subsequent official applications to the LLO. On the contrary, mentioning to the LLO that the RC has approved the publications seems to have increased the chances of a publication permit being issued.

One example is Kamban forlag, a publishing house that collaborated willingly with both the RC and the Norwegian Nazi Party NS, or Nasjonal Samling ["National Gathering"] (Ringdal, 1995, p. 114). On August 17, 1942 they applied for permission to publish a translation of a 1937 children's book by Ditha Holesch (1901-1992), *Der schwarze Hengst Bento*, to be translated as *Den svarte hingsten Bento* ["Bento, the black stallion"] by Per Schulstad. Kamban forlag's application follows the regular formula, but adds: "At the same time, we can announce that we have obtained the RC's approval of the translation" (application signed 17 August, 1942).³² The LLO sent the book to their children's literature expert, Cecilie Dahl. In her statement of 21 September, 1942, she writes that the book is about "a young purebred horse from a German stud farm, who is shipped to Brazil and subjected to cruel treatment there".³³ The horse breaks loose and becomes a "leader for a growing herd of horses" (statement signed 21 September, 1942).³⁴ Dahl describes the horse's "noble character, its courage and wisdom" which "leads the herd through natural disasters and saves it from captivity" (statement signed 21 September, 1942). On September 28, 1942, the LLO grants Kamban forlag permission to publish the book.

The story of Bento is easily read as an allegory of a strong and beloved leader, and the horse's character is depicted early on as being suited for leadership (Holessch, 1943, p. 15):

In few weeks it had put all the foals under its rule, most of them obeyed voluntarily, but many, especially among the stallions of the same age, had to be forced under with bites and blows. It turned out that Bento was not only the fastest and most enduring, but also the strongest. In Cora's now half-a-year-old son, all the qualities of a good leader were distinct. It even had its own herd which had submitted to it.³⁵

³² ST: "Samtidig kan vi meddele at vi har innhentet Reichskommissariats godkjennelse for oversettelsen".

³³ ST: "en ung rasehest fra et tysk stutteri, som blir sendt til Brasilien og utsat for grusom behandling der".

³⁴ ST: "fører for en voksende flokk hester".

³⁵ This and the following quotes from *Der schwarze Hengst Bento* are translations into English from the Norwegian TT: "På få uker hadde den fått alle føllene under sitt herredømme, de fleste adlød frivillig, men mange, særlig blant de jevnaldrende hingstene, måtte den tvinge under seg med bitt og slag. Det syntes seg at Bento ikke bare var den hurtigste og mest utholdende, men også den sterkeste. Hos Coras no halvårsgamle sønn var alle de egenskaper utpreget som en god fører må ha. Den hadde da også sin flokk som var den underdanig".

In the Norwegian translation, the choice of word for “leader” is not neutral in this context. Its translation as “fører” connotes the German word “Führer”, with all its associations. The synonym “leder” would have been a more neutral alternative, but was perhaps dismissed due to its etymological relation to the English word “leader”. As a symptom of the markedness of “fører”, statistics from the Norwegian National Library show that “førereren” was far less used in Norway after the war than “lederen” (the en-suffix creates the definite form of the noun, thus excluding the homonymous verb “to lead” from the statistics). The turning point occurred during the occupation, with “lederen” surpassing “førereren” in 1944, despite being fairly equally distributed before WWII (see Figure 1).

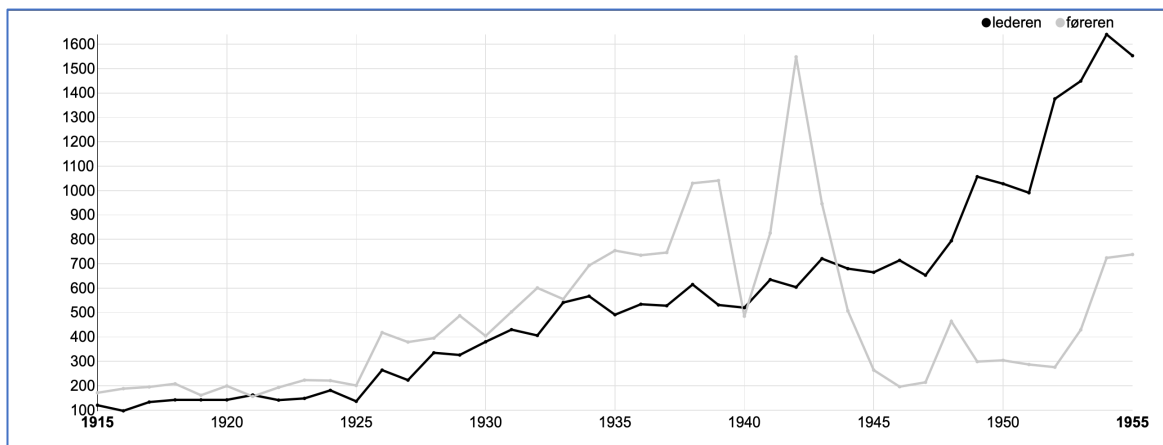


Figure 1. Absolute frequency of “førereren” and “lederen” in Norwegian newspapers (1915-1955).

Indeed, the Nazi German *Führerprinzip* (the ideology of the lone and all-powerful leader) is present in the book, as descriptions of Bento’s authoritative leadership are paired with messages of the benefits of following the leader (Holesch, 1943, p. 173): “Bento has united the herd tightly together again. Had the horses been persecuted while there was dispute among them, it would have been easy to catch at least some of them. But now they are again a solid whole with a leader to obey.”³⁶

In *Der schwarze Hengst Bento*, Holesch frequently gives the horses human-like motivations, personifying them to the point of anthropomorphism: although the author avoids giving the animals words, she describes their actions as if they were based on cognitive reasoning. Here is a rendering into English, from the Norwegian translation, of a scene during which Bento challenges a younger stallion and wins (Holesch, 1943, p. 103): “Then the herd’s leader mare runs over to Bento, lovingly snuggles up against him and sniffs him tenderly. And all the horses acknowledge the rule of the stallion as the right of the strongest. Bento circles around the herd, he trots in wide circles. He holds his head up

³⁶ Norwegian TT: “Bento har samlet flokken fast sammen igjen. Var hestene blitt forfulgt mens det var splid blant dem, hadde det vært en lett sak å fange iallfall en del av dem. Men no er de igjen et fast hele med en fører som skal adlydes”.

proudly, his eyes sparkling with the joy of victory”.³⁷ In addition to the anthropomorphism, there are two things to take note of in this passage. Firstly, the choice of words: “leading mare” being translated as “førerhoppe” and not “lederhoppe”, thus again evoking the concept of the “Führer”; and secondly, the nod to social Darwinism: “the right of the strongest” is a common though misleading Norwegian translation of Darwin’s “survival of the fittest”. On that note, it should be mentioned that the book is full of racist stereotypes based on the idea of race as decisive for undesirable attributes, such as alcoholism and animal cruelty. Most non-German characters are introduced with reference to race, as in this example (Holesch, 1943, p. 135): “Serrano is a bastard of Indian and Negro, a true cafuzo with the immorality of both races”.³⁸

The book is aimed at a young readership, with animals as the central characters and with an allegoric message of soft propaganda. Its readers may not necessarily be aware that its contents had the power to generate sympathy for an authoritative Führer-type figure, as well as negative attitudes towards racialized non-white people. The RC’s role in the matter is not crystal clear; it was not the RC that initiated the publication, but its involvement and approval nevertheless influenced the publication process. Since the book lacks literary quality, which could in theory have provoked a refusal from the LLO, the RC’s approval may have been important to the publisher. The fact that the LLO asked for a consultant’s statement may further indicate that they were not convinced of the work’s suitability but were willing to consider it – possibly due to the RC’s involvement. Unfortunately, the archival material can neither confirm nor refute this hypothesis.

4.4 Category IV: The LLO contacts the RC. Two examples

It was not only publishing houses that contacted the RC, involving them in decision-making processes and thus empowering them; the LLO did so, too. The following examples illustrate two different types of communication: the LLO asking the RC for advice and the LLO informing the RC of a decision.

In the summer of 1942, Blix, a publisher collaborating with the NS and the RC, applied to the LLO for permission to publish five books (application signed 25 June, 1942), three of which were in German: *Wenak – Die Karawane ruft: Auf verschollenen Pfaden durch Ägyptens Wüsten*, by Hansjoachim von der Esch (1941); *Pelzjäger, Prärien und Präsidenten: Fahrten und Erlebnisse zwischen New York und Alaska*, by A. E. Johann (1937); and *Lapin Hullu: Eine Winterfahrt durch lappische Wildmarken*, by Lieselotte Kattwinkel (1941).³⁹ These adventure stories aimed at a younger readership are typical of this period: they exoticize foreign others, as well as promote the stereotype of the “noble savage” – the idea

³⁷ Norwegian TT: “Da løper førerhoppen i flokken bort til Bento, klemmer seg kjærlig inntil den og snuser ømt til den. Og alle hestene erkjenner hingstens herredømme som den sterkeste rett. Bento kretser rundt flokken, den traver i store buer. Hodet holder den stolt til værs, øynene funkler i seiersglede”.

³⁸ Norwegian TT: “Serrano er en bastard av indianer og neger, en ekte cafuzo med begge rasers udyder”.

³⁹ The three books came out in Norwegian in 1943: *Karavane: på glemte stier gjennom Egypts ørkener* (transl. H. Sjøberg); *Prærie- og pelsjegerliv* (transl. Eva Thesen); and *Lapin hullu: en tur med pulk gjennom lappenes rike i vinternatten* (transl. Eva Thesen, with the author’s name changed to “Liselotte Pantenburg”).

of the “purity” of people living “outside of civilization”. Asbjørn Bjaanes at the LLO subsequently wrote to Finke at the RC, asking him to “kindly let us know whether the Reich Commissioner has any objections to these books being translated” (letter signed 6 July, 1942).⁴⁰ What prompted the LLO to ask is not certain; this was not something they did with all German books. But, as the next example also shows, the RC’s special interest in German literature was not unknown to the LLO. In any case, once the RC had been involved, its role soon became central, as a discussion about an abridged version of *Pelzjäger, Prärien und Präsidenten* arose, in which Finke, Blix, the German publishers and a consultant for the LLO became involved.⁴¹ The details of that process are beyond the scope of this article, but the fact is nevertheless worth mentioning, as it is an example of how the RC went beyond influencing what texts should be published, and even left its mark in the text itself.

The second part of this category is exemplified by a letter sent from Bjaanes at the LLO and addressed to Finke at the RC. The topic is the autobiography *Eine Kindheit* (1922), by German author and poet Hans Carossa.⁴² It is a short letter, stating only: “Gyldendal publishing house, Oslo, was upon their request given permission to publish the above-mentioned book in Norwegian translation” (letter signed 21 September, 1942).⁴³ Again, the LLO did not report every authorization given for German books to the RC, and it is difficult to identify any pattern since the archive is incomplete. In this particular example, it might be that the RC was informed because of the author’s position in Germany: Carossa was a popular poet who, despite not being a Nazi, was in 1941 appointed head of the European Union of Writers by the German Minister of Propaganda, Joseph Goebbels (Barbian, 2013, pp. 256-257).⁴⁴ Carossa accepted this position, but the European Union of Writers never became the success the German authorities had hoped for (Barbian, 2013, p. 258). Carossa had something of a paradoxical status in Germany, since he rejected the regime to some extent, while at the same time being promoted by it (he was, for example, included in Hitler and Goebbel’s list of artists exempted from military service [Klee, 2007, p. 94]). This in itself may have been reason enough to keep the RC posted about permissions to publish his work in translation. It is unfortunately difficult to determine whether the RC had asked to be kept informed or whether the LLO acted on its own initiative, based on existing archival material.

5. Concluding remarks

The archival research presented in this article shows that the RC’s involvement in literary translation in occupied Norway took various forms. The different directions of

⁴⁰ The letter was written in German: “Blix Forlag A/S hat das Departement um Erlaubnis gebeten, folgende Bücher in norwegische [sic] Übersetzung herausgeben zu dürfen: (...) Wir bitten Sie, uns mitzuteilen, ob das Reichskommissariat etwas dagegen hat, dass diese Bücher übersetzt werden”.

⁴¹ Sources: letters signed 16 July, 1942, 20 July, 1942, 2 September, 1942, 7 September, 1942, and 24 September, 1942.

⁴² The book came out in Norway in 1942 as *En barndom*, translated by Sigrid Skirstad.

⁴³ In German: “Gyldendal Norsk Forlag, Oslo, har [sic] auf Antrag die Erlaubnis erhalten, das oben erwähnte Buch in norwegischer Übersetzung herauszugeben”.

⁴⁴ In German: Europäische Schriftstellervereinigung (ESV).

communication – whether it was the RC that contacted the LLO or publishers, or vice versa – are only one way of classifying this material. It is possible to investigate the RC's involvement in other ways, for instance by categorizing the findings according to the genre or country of origin of the works in question. That might be fruitful for future research. However, the method chosen here does have its uses. The finding that this was not a one-way street of communication going from the RC (the higher authority in this matter) is interesting, because it shows how some publishers as well as the LLO worked to align themselves with the RC. The contacts made on the publishers' initiative differ in nature from those made by the LLO. Since the LLO was situated above the publishers but below the RC in this particular power hierarchy, publishers could effectively level the power differential between themselves and the LLO by making an agreement directly with the RC before applying for their publication permit. Similarly, there is a difference between the RC contacting publishers directly and working through the LLO, since, in the latter case, the RC's influence on the publishing process is less overt. Such covert influence on translated publications may have been designed to strengthen the works' potential as soft propaganda. If it had been known that the initiative came from German Nazi authorities in Norway, sales could have been damaged, because the local resistance movement organized boycotts of publishers collaborating with the occupiers (cf. Ringdal, 1995, p. 118).

The LLO, with Bjaanes in charge, was extremely powerful in the field of translated literature in occupied Norway, exerting strict control over what could legally be published (Solberg, forthcoming). The archival material reveals that there was a second, powerful institution working both overtly and covertly to influence the field. The present article shows that this part of their activity was in line with the German Foreign Office's view on translated literature and its potential as soft propaganda. Since many of the documents in the RC's archives were destroyed before the end of WWII, there is now to my knowledge no archive in the country that shows what institution in Germany oversaw the RC's literary branch in Norway, although it is likely that they did report to bodies in Germany. A suggestion such as *Amaryll* may very well have come from a German institution in Nazi Germany. Indeed, it is not unlikely that the webs of communication in the field of translated literature in occupied Norway were wider and even more complex than our material suggests; the full extent of the RC's roles and involvement is yet to be determined. Nevertheless, it is clear from the LLO's archives that the RC influenced the field of translated literature in occupied Norway in a variety of ways – from openly encouraging or supporting publications to secretly giving instructions behind the scenes.

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