

How the poem "Pan Tadeusz" was translated into Bulgarian language

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Abstract— The history of the translation of the poem "Pan Tadeusz" into Bulgarian language covers a long period and poses many questions. The article represents a journey in time with the most important and significant moments over the last century and enlightens upon details of the translation process. Many authors venture into the field of translation of Adam Mickiewicz's most remarkable and famous work. These are devoted writers, poets and professional translators – Ivan Vazov, Efrem Karanov, Hristo Kesjakov, Slava Shtiplieva, Dora Gabe, Blaga Dimitrova. Main result is the full translation of the poem as well as the personal contributions of the authors with higher criticism of the scientists.

Index Terms— Blaga Dimitrova, Bulgarian language, Pan Tadeusz, Polish literature, Slavic literature, translation.

1 INTRODUCTION

INDISPUTABLY The epic "Pan Tadeusz" is considered to be Adam Mickiewicz's most remarkable and famous work.

Because of it, the author ranks on a pedestal alongside with Homer, Vergil, Dante, Pushkin and Cervantes [1].

"Pan Tadeusz" is of great significance for the Polish people for whom the epic symbolizes strength, trust and faith in the revival of Poland. At the same time, it acts as a symbolic image of the cherished fatherland for the emigrants [1]. The action takes place in 1811 – 1812 evolving a wide range of events recreated in dialogues and memories [2]. Mickiewicz's original intention was to create an idyll about the life of the Polish nobility, but subsequently his work took the form of a big epic poem [3]. The author prompts as a discourse a way of reading the book which fairy-tale style comes with its beauty and topicality [4].

One of the most famous Polish poets Leopold Staff says. "If you happen to wake up any Polish person from a deep sleep and ask them all of a sudden which is the best, the most favourite Polish book, I think that almost each one of them would shout out "Pan Tadeusz" without any hesitation [5].

2 HISTORY OF THE TRANSLATION OF THE POEM "PAN TADEUSZ" INTO BULGARIAN LANGUAGE. JOURNEY IN TIME.

The Bulgarian poetess Dora Gabe notes that "Mickiewicz has put into his heroes features from the national Polish character, typical for the Polish people, which perpetuates his work". [6]. As Boyan Bioltchev [7] notes, "The works of Mickiewicz came to life in Bulgarian language a few more than twenty years after his death (1855, c.m. WS), after the Liberation of Bulgaria.". Among those works was "Pan Tadeusz". At that time the arrival of his brilliant epic encounters certain difficulties:

- Late coming of the Polish literature to Bulgaria;
- Insufficient knowledge of the Polish language on the part of the translators;
- Difficulties in finding a suitable verse that on the one hand has to be the closest possible version the original, and on the other hand to be positively accepted by the Bulgarian reader [8].

When and how did the first attempts for translation of the epic begin? In 1884 in a collection of approximately 500 pages entitled "Bulgarian Reader", the patriarch of the Bulgarian literature Ivan Vazov included his own translation of a fragment of the poem - "The Epilogue". Vazov was the first one to introduce Mickiewicz to the Bulgarian public [9]. It is necessary to mention that Vazov's choice to translate the poem was not accidental. On the one hand, the poet wanted to acquaint the Bulgarian reader with other famous works from the European literature. On the other hand, the feelings and emotions expressed in the "Epilogue" were very proximate to the feelings

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of the Bulgarian emigrants. It's a pity that the Bulgarian poet and writer didn't translate directly from Polish language but he used the Russian translations of N. Berg and S. Durov instead.

This is probably the reason why his translation varies from the original at various points [10]. Nevertheless, Vazov's approach to the translation is one with a defined translation concept, which according to Kalina Bahneva, is closely related to his personal dreams for epos. She proves that "without a doubt Vazov's translation sounds more like an epic compared to the Russian one. The phrase is syncopated and there are many rhetorical questions" [11]. Although Vazov's translation in Bulgarian language was not fully accurate it followed the exposed epic inspiration and won very big popularity in Bulgaria [8]. In the same Reader Vazov also includes a short essay about Mickiewicz accentuating that "his poetry is remarkable for its deep content expressed in a literary form" [12]. In the years to come other translators had made attempts to improve Vazov's version and to achieve adequacy with the original translating directly from Polish language [8]. The interest in Mickiewicz's work continued to grow.

In the last decade of 19th century two translators: Efrem Karanov and Hristo Kesyakov committed to work on the translation of "Pan Tadeusz" this time directly from Polish.

In 1889 Hristo Kesyakov published three parts from the first, fourth and twelfth book in a "Reader of Literature Study" [8] together with illustrations by the Polish artist M. Andriolli [13]. Several years later (1901) Efrem Karanov presented the first full translation of the epic [8]. Anyway, it turns out that his language is not enough expressive and poetic. He concentrates mainly on the translation itself at the expense of the poetic power of the verse, the imagery and the atmosphere. The translator from Kratovo mostly wanted to give the reader a sense of the gist and the main values [14]. He even allows himself inaccuracies particularly deviating from the original, for example, "w szarej godzinie", meaning "at dusk", Karanov translates as "in the unhappy year". He also increases the number of the verses in the songs, for example, in the second song of his translation there are 995 verses, whereas the original has only 850 [9]. Soon after the publication of the Karanov's translation, the literary critic Bozhan Angelov wrote a review in which he expressed his scepticism about the future of the translation [8]. The strong criticism Karanov had to face up could not kill Kesyakov's desire to show his translations to the public.

From 1918 to his death he published seven parts. Kesyakov's translation is considered to be a better one than Karanov's, mainly because Kesyakov shows better command of the original language but here also one can notice a loss of connection to the poetic idea [9]. In the beginning of the 20th century it is evident that Vazov's translation continues to stand out as the most meaningful and the most preferred of the three.

With time the expectations of the Bulgarian public for a better quality translation of the rest of "Pan Tadeusz" songs were growing. A natural necessity of a new translation of the other parts of the poem was raised [8]. So in 1921 one of the most prominent Bulgarian poetesses Dora Gabe translated the

fourth, tenth, eleventh and twelfth books. Polish literature was introduced to Dora Gabe by her husband Boyan Penev - a great expert in that field. He also helped her in the translation of the poem. That's how the poetess remembers the first steps of her work on the translation: "Boyan Boev translated one excerpt from "Pan Tadeusz" and made me remodel it in verse. In the same way we translated a second and a third fragments. In 1919 he sent me to Krustets in the Teteven Balkan where I spent the summer, translated several of Mickiewicz's "The Crimean Sonnets", whereas he made me work more. But that wasn't enough for him. As soon as I came back he started to teach me grammar himself and to test me every morning baffling me and laughing over my feeling at a loss and helpless. Thus imperceptibly I began to read and to understand and funny enough Boyan Penev turned me into his assistant and consequently into an ardent propagandist of the Polish poetry" [15]. It's interesting to note that Gabe very often highlights the complicity of the Slav languages and she shares that the analytical type of the Bulgarian language restricts the translator up to six types of rhymes [16]. To translate an epic like "Pan Tadeusz" is not an easy task at all, as Dora Gabe herself points out: "As for myself who only translated four excerpts from this big poem it became clear how hard its translation was. It's not a question of translating the content only - at trying hard, the technical difficulties could be overcome to some extent but the most important thing was to render the specific air blowing from Mickiewicz's verse that creates an atmosphere of warmth, love and faith" [6].

Professor Dinekov comments her skilful translation, saying: "Through Dora Gabe's translation the Bulgarian reader can feel the thrill and the beauty of the Polish land, to brush against the Polish forests where you can hear the song of the Wojski's forged horn, to shudder at the might of the storm described in the 10th song, to experience the depth of the lyrical mood in the appeal to 1812, to revel in the delightful sound of the music played by the old cymbalist Jankiel" [9]. Gabe restores the hope of the Bulgarian reader who wants to have the chance to read the whole of the Mickiewicz's epic. It's a pity she didn't publish other translations any longer [8].

In 1955 another Bulgarian poetess and translator Slava Shtiplieva finished the full translation of "Pan Tadeusz" [9]. Shtiplieva was criticised many-fold by Professor Dinekov who did not agree with the publishing of her translation [17].

3 THE CONTRIBUTION OF BLAGA DIMITROVA – FULL TRANSLATION OF THE POEM "PAN TADEUSZ" INTO BULGARIAN LANGUAGE.

Another well-known Bulgarian poetess to take over Dora Gabe's work was Blaga Dimitrova. She published a full translation of the whole poem "Pan Tadeusz" in 1959. It's an interesting fact that one of the first reviews of Dimitrova's work was written by Dora Gabe greeting her younger colleague on the accomplishment of the translation of the epic and for all her input of efforts, energy and work [8]. A year after its publishing in her review Dora Gabe praised Blaga Dimitrova saying that the coming of "Pan Tadeusz" in Bulgaria was "a great

cultural achievement" as was the translation of "Divine Comedy", "Eugene Onegin", "Don Quixote" [6]. The literary critic and Blaga Dimitrova's husband Yordan Vasilev shared that there was no jealousy between Gabe and Dimitrova but very good friendship (this comment was shared in an interview of Weronika Szwedek with the literary critic, writer and Blaga Dimitrova's husband - Yordan Vasilev, Sofia (10.11.2013, 17.01.2014).

It's also interesting to note that Dimitrova commenced the translation of the Polish epic when she was a twenty years old university student and her tutor Petar Dinekov gave her the original epic [18]. The poetess remembers: "On the first page in writing he wished me success with the translation so he could accompany its first publication with a preface written by him. (...) Looking back now I see that it was one of the few promises I had made in my youth and didn't give up in the middle" [18].

Carrying out that creative challenge turned out to be not an easy task. Dimitrova spent long time trying to find the words that most match the translation. What the translator found most difficult was the rhythm. "Pan Tadeusz" is written in a flowing 13-syllable verse with a caesura after the seventh syllable, whereas all the rhymes are feminine. After various attempts at using a three-syllable dactyl she opted for 13-metre iamb [18]. Besides, she worked in the meagre light of a small gas lamp almost without using dictionaries or reference books [18]. A typical way to achieve rhyme used by the translators is moving the lines of the text. Dora Gabe accentuated that using this technique when translating Mickiewicz's epic would interfere with its composition. She acknowledged that in that respect Blaga Dimitrova had managed to fully achieve the typical for Mickiewicz complicity [15]. It's possible that the mastery in the translation of "Pan Tadeusz" is due to some other fact. According to Yordan Vasilev, Blaga Dimitrova "wasn't speaking in Polish, she was speaking the language of Mickiewicz". This fact was shared in an interview of Weronika Szwedek with the literary critic, writer and Blaga Dimitrova's husband - Yordan Vasilev, Sofia (10.11.2013, 17.01.2014).

Another impressive detail, which might have had contribution into triggering her creative potential, was Nikolai Valchev's magical gift full of positive charge - he brought to the Bulgarian poetess an oak leaf and an acorn from the "Mickiewicz's oak" from the birthplace of the great Polish poet [5].

In conversation with the journalist Mariana Ivanova a friend of hers who lives in Bulgaria shares that the translation of "Pan Tadeusz" by Gabe and by Dimitrova is enormous and complex work also because they didn't translate from modern Polish language. Ivanova [19] announced that when compared in the Bulgarian version of Blaga Dimitrova there are 400 stanzas more per 10 000 stanzas in the original Polish version.

CONCLUSION

Several generations of translators had worked on the translation of the great Mickiewicz's epic. The contribution made by each one of them is worth noticing. Indisputably Blaga Dimitrova's translation has remained in history as the most qualitative, beautiful and significant.

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