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# INTERLINGUAL MEDIATION IN THE PERIOD OF LEND-LEASE BY ARCTIC ALLIED CONVOYS

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### *Abstract*

The article highlights the results of a research project aimed at determining the main methods of interlingual mediation in the years of Arctic convoys. The research has been conducted by leading universities of the Russian North and allowed for solution of a number of interrelated problems, including the investigation of interlingual mediation during the war years, introduction of the history of translation and interpreting during the period of the Arctic convoys as a special branch of scientific knowledge, adjacent to national history, theory of intercultural communication, international relations and translation studies. We have identified the main methods of interlingual mediation in the Russian North during the Great Patriotic War, as well as clarified the role of mediation activities of non-professional translators/interpreters in the years of lend-lease deliveries by Arctic allied convoys. Adaptive transcoding as one of the types of interlingual mediation is considered in the study not only in the framework of the traditional approach with recipient group and skopos being determining factors, but also with account of communicative situation. The article presents the data obtained through the analysis of archival documents, which have been in open access over recent years. The analysis has allowed systematizing and assessing the mediation activities of customs officers, the military, teachers, students, as well as employees of international clubs (Interclubs) of Arkhangelsk, Murmansk and Molotovsk. Special attention is paid to the functions of Interclubs as both recreational places and educational, or even agitational institutions.

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**Keywords:** Interlingual mediation, non-professional translation, arctic convoys, Interclub.



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## 1. Introduction

Russia's relations with its Western neighbors have been difficult for centuries, especially in the second half of the 20th century. Legacy of the past sometimes acts as a setback, which makes it necessary to reproduce an objective picture of Russia's relations with Western States, i.e. to find the connecting link and make it the foundation for expanding international contacts. It should also be noted that the role of the West in the victory over Hitler had been diminished in Soviet historiography for a long time. Today, the need to restore historical justice together with the possibility of restoring some secret or inaccessible facts serve as prerequisites for describing past relations between the allies and Soviet citizens (Walling, 2016).

Since the late nineties, more and more information about the role of lend-lease during the Great Patriotic War has been accumulated. Lend-lease is considered from various viewpoints: escorting Arctic convoys, types of goods delivered to the Soviet Union during this period, cost of goods, military operations on escorting convoys, detailed description of individual convoys, memories of convoy participants who escorted goods on board to Soviet ports. Suprun (1997; 2010) rightly notes that since the end of 1944 lend-lease has gradually transformed into the concept of 'global cooperation', known today as 'globalization'.

However, there are no studies on the role of translators and interpreters as mediators between cargo suppliers, engineers, customs services, medical staff. Work with archival collections, some of which have become available to researchers only in recent years, has allowed us tracing, identifying and describing the roles of people engaged in intercultural mediation during the Arctic convoys. Within the framework of the considered problem, we should pay special attention to the concept of 'interlingual mediation', which means the ability to establish contacts, negotiate, plan international activities, and create a positive emotional atmosphere in the process of intercultural communication.

In recent years, the state archives have opened access to some documents that give an opportunity to reconsider the specifics of intercultural mediation during the work of the Arctic allied convoys, in particular, the specifics of personal contacts between representatives of the allied countries.

## 2. Problem Statement

Interest in studying the role of Arctic allied convoys during the Great Patriotic War is reflected in numerous researches, memoirs and documents on the Northern lend-lease supply route. However, the published materials mainly cover the issues of convoys' escorting, formation and safety. Despite the abundance of research results published in print and on the Internet, no attempt has been made to analyze the peculiarities of interlingual mediation of the period of the Arctic convoys.

## 3. Research Questions

The need to study interlingual mediation during the Arctic convoys in 1941–1945 is due to poor coverage of this issue in previous research. The analysis of data obtained in the archives of Murmansk and Arkhangelsk allows shedding light on such issues as recruitment of staff responsible for intercultural mediation, specifics of mediation activities of non-professional translators, and systematizing information about translators of the period under study.

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The study aims at determining the main methods of interlingual mediation in the years of Arctic convoys.

#### **5. Research Methods**

The research methods include the general scientific methods of analysis and synthesis, comparative analysis of original and translated documents of the period of the Arctic allied convoys. Translatological analysis has allowed identifying the key translation strategies in the period under study. Hermeneutical analysis has been carried out to investigate the ways of achieving understanding in the course of interlingual mediation.

#### **6. Findings**

Murmansk and Arkhangelsk cities played an important role in supply of weapons and food. The so-called non-professional translation was one of the types of intercultural mediation in the period of lend-lease deliveries by Arctic allied convoys, and non-professional translators/interpreters played a major role in this process. Professional translation/interpreting referred mainly to the military sphere and was performed by graduates of specialized and accelerated translation courses. However, the arrival of ships to Murmansk and Arkhangelsk raised the question on carrying out mediation activities in customs offices, medical institutions, as well as recreational places (Kokanova, 2016).

At the beginning of the war, employees of the All-Union organization for cultural relations with foreigners came to Murmansk and established the Interclub. In the years of lend-lease deliveries, the Interclub served as a place where English and American sailors spent their leisure time.

In medical institutions, the role of non-professional interpreters was often played by the wounded, who shared wards with the British and Americans. For example, a pole, who shared a ward with British and American sailors, had some knowledge of both English and Russian languages and acted as a non-professional interpreter, helping medical staff to communicate with the wounded.

During the allied lend-lease period, Murmansk and Arkhangelsk became ports admitting British and American ships, which sometimes laid off for months waiting for repairs or cargo. Crew members, thus, had to live for some time in these port cities, and somehow solve the problem of interlingual mediation in different spheres of life. There was a lack of professional interpreters, whose main mission consisted in mediation in the military sphere. The role of mediators in the so-called civil spheres of life was transferred to non-professional translators/interpreters. Against the need to establish contacts, provide medical assistance, count goods, search for a protective construction in a dilapidated war city, the tasks of understanding and interpretation of foreign speech and written texts as well as rendering the content into a target language became paramount.

The first convoys came to Murmansk in the winter of 1942. During this period, the main tasks of the Murmansk customs included control over the passage of export-import goods, examination of luggage, parcels, passengers of ships, inspection and release of goods, fight against smuggling. Due to the special strategic importance of goods delivered to Murmansk, it was decided to increase the staff of the

Murmansk customs to 30 people and to replenish it with highly qualified personnel from other customs institutions of the Soviet Union (primarily from Arkhangelsk and Leningrad). According to the staff list, there was no interpreter/translator post in the Murmansk customs office in the period up to 1944. All customs clearance, as well as correspondence were carried out by employees (inspectors and supervisors). However, according to archival documents, interpreter E.P. Dreyer arrived to Murmansk from Vladivostok customs in August 1942. Later, on the 5th of February 1944, inspector-interpreter Debera Vykhodz arrived to Murmansk from Vladivostok customs (Golovin, 2001).

The customs inspector's work was characterized by the lack of time, since the customs clearance of Soviet ships must take up to 2 hours, while the customs clearance of foreign ships must take no longer than 1 hour. As for military vessels, they were not subject to inspection.

Competence of customs officers in foreign languages resulted from a large number of international contacts in the field of customs clearance implying that customs officers should be ready for both oral and written professional foreign-language communication. Foreign language proficiency and readiness for professional communication are among the requirements for a customs officer's work.

Master's declaration with appendix should be provided at the inspection of vessels in the period of lend-lease deliveries. The declaration included:

- list of passengers and their luggage;
- list of ship's crew members (ship's role);
- customs documents (export permission, certificate of cargo origin);
- cargo documents (bill of lading);
- trade documents (invoices, specifications);
- ship documents (tonnage certificate, patent for flag raising);
- sanitary patent;
- list of goods transported without bills of lading;
- list of the stock and currency values belonging to ship cash desk, and deposited values;
- list of weapons, explosives and flammable substances shipped as cargo or items of ship's equipment;
- list of items not intended for the personal use of crew members;
- inventory of ship's provision and items of ship's supplies and equipment, as well as a list of captain's and crew members' belongings.

Unloading of lend-lease goods was carried out in ports under control of two customs officers – on board and in a landing place. As a rule, due to the lack of sufficient rigging force, customs officers almost always took part in unloading goods (Mann, 2002).

Considering translation as a social function of intercultural mediation required analyzing the work of instructors of the Murmansk Interclub, the Arkhangelsk Interclub of sailors and its branch in Molotovsk during lend-lease deliveries by Arctic allied convoys.

The club's goal consisted in agitation and propaganda of revolutionary ideas among sailors and port workers with the aim of overthrowing the capitalist system and the bourgeois state, as well as in rallying sailors for revolutionizing trade unions all around the world. The club also carried out ideological work and provided mass cultural services to foreign sailors, at the same time preventing

drunkenness and speculation. Special attention in the Interclubs of Arkhangelsk, Murmansk, and Molotovsk was paid to promoting anti-fascist ideas among Soviet and foreign seamen and highlighting the need of joint struggle of the Soviet people, the peoples of England and America against the German fascist threat. In this regard, the Department of propaganda and agitation of the Regional Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) proposed to devote all the clubs' work to anti-fascist activities, and explain to sailors that the only way to save the freedom-loving peoples of the world from the Nazi invaders is a hard, cruel joint struggle of the Anglo-Soviet-American coalition (Woodman, 2007).

The functions performed by Interclub employees, often regardless of their position, are reflected in the archival documents. For example, Simon Khurgin – senior instructor of the Murmansk international club of sailors, worked in Interclubs of the Soviet Union since 1931, and held the post of interpreter at the centre of war prisoners from 1941 to 1943. It is of special interest that, according to the personal file of Simon Khurgin, his "education is primary". In Murmansk, he worked as a senior instructor in spreading culture among the masses, thus contributing to the improvement of the Interclub and strengthening friendship between freedom-loving peoples. He spent a lot of time in the port, in the areas of unloading convoys, mobilizing crews for the speedy unloading of imported cargo and sending it to the front. Simon Khurgin was the direct organizer of events, lectures, reports, film screenings held in the Interclub, as well as the organizer of groups of foreign donors. Tatyana Gorinova, head of the cultural, mass, political and educational department of the Murmansk Interclub, managed to properly organize political work among foreign sailors, which was aimed at educating them to sympathize with the Soviet Union, as well as to mobilize foreign sailors for early processing of convoys. Tatyana Gorinova worked in Arkhangelsk Interclub until April 23, 1943, and then she started working in the Murmansk Interclub. Being head of the department, Tatyana Gorinova translated texts of political reports, conversations, Soviet films from Russian into English. She acquainted foreign sailors with the reports of the Soviet Information Bureau, made reports, conducted group and individual conversations with foreign sailors. Tatyana Gorinova paid special attention to reports and lectures devoted to the heroic deeds of the Red Army, as well as personally acted as an interpreter at the demonstration of Soviet films and concerts.

As can be seen from the characteristics of Raisa Lisitsyna, controller of the Inflat, she mastered the English language in a short time and "faithfully performed all her duties." Raisa Lisitsyna serviced foreign ships and performed a lot of work on assisting foreign sailors wounded in port and on travel routes (Brown, 2014).

The information provided illustrates that the staff of various institutions, whose activities were more or less connected with the work of the port, learned English in a short time to be able to carry out their duties.

## **7. Conclusion**

In recent years, the state archives have opened access to some documents that give an opportunity to reconsider the specifics of intercultural mediation during the work of the Arctic allied convoys, in particular, the specifics of personal contacts between representatives of the allied countries. Archival sources of information on this topic can be divided into the following groups:

- the first group is represented with records of conversations between heads of states, as well as diplomats, representatives of military departments, journalists of the Soviet Union, the United States and Great Britain. These documents can be found in I.V. Stalin's personal archives, in the funds of Molotov and Maysky and other documentary collections, which are stored in the archive of foreign policy of the Russian Federation. They include official protocols and contain documents of a personal nature, such as foreigners' letters to the head of the Soviet Union;
- the second group includes reports of diplomatic representatives, namely representatives of the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs of the USSR in the Northern ports; such documents are, as a rule, either analytical notes or reports that are similar to diary entries having a less formal character;
- the third group includes reports of the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs: reports on the criminal situation, on the moods of foreign sailors, as well as on the contacts of foreigners with Soviet citizens.

Such archival documents allow determining the specifics of interlingual mediation both at the professional and non-professional levels.

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