

# Interpreting in situations of violence: Stories of interpreters during the Nazi Occupation in Greece

## *A sociological perspective*

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Whereas the interest in interpreting in contemporary conflict situations is increasing, there seem to be few works focusing on the role of interpreters in situations of extreme violence in the past, especially during the Second World War (Lan 2016: 196; Wolf 2016: 2). The aim of this paper is to contribute to covering this gap, by presenting insights of the interpreters' identity and practice during the Nazi Occupation in Greece. The Axis Forces occupied Greece in 1941. Interpreters were used for the communication with the local population, but also during interrogations or executions. German officers who could speak Greek and Greek civilians with German language skills were recruited mostly as ad-hoc interpreters. In this extreme violent context (Tryuk 2016: 121), the interpreters' responsibilities, potential power, ethics, ideology and active role clearly reverse the image of the neutral interpreter (Cronin 2006). Aiming at shedding light on the interpreter's identity, life-story, activity and experiences before and during the war, this paper studies specific cases from a sociological point of view (such as the cases of Napoleon Sukatzidis, political prisoner used as interpreter at Chaidari concentration camp, Kostas Lekkas, Greek interpreter and collaborator of the Nazis, Ekhart Kästner, German librarian and writer, NSPD member, recruited as interpreter by the Nazis and Jaques Albala, Jewish interpreter and collaborator of the Nazis) (Chandrinou et al. 2018). Being strongly convinced that no academic field can develop into the future, without exploring and (re)constructing its past (Takeda & Baigorri-Jalón: 2016: 8), this contribution in the field of history of interpreting studies aspires to enhance the understanding on the role of interpreters in situations of violence and to shed light on questions relevant to the sociology and ethics of interpreting.

### References

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