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**INTERPRETERS IN UNIFORM:
AN UNNOTICED PROFESSION**

History, Role, and Training of Military Interpreters

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This thesis is dedicated to

mum and dad.
Thank you!

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PREFACE

Two and a half years ago, in August 2002, while attending a Language course in Berlin, I had the opportunity to visit, together with all the other Ministries, the German Ministry of Defense.

That very visit acted as a catalyst for the creation of this work of mine and since that moment I have never thought about any other plausible subject for my thesis, even while going through an apparently endless maze to collect all sort of information.

Before that summer I had never come across the term *Military Interpreter*, neither had I known anything about the linguistic facet of this military capability. Nevertheless, the experience in Germany opened my eyes to a reality which I realized to be too often undisclosed and unrecorded. For that reason I decided to learn more about it and to bring this study to the academic light.

In Berlin I had the first contacts of my life with some Military Interpreters, who, in the framework of the *Bundessprachenamt* – the Language Department of the Federal Ministry of Defense – described to me their work and their tasks during Peace Support Operations (peace-building and peacekeeping) showing me simulations of consecutive and simultaneous interpretations in very delicate contexts.

Their dedication and their passion for this delicate job under such an excellent organization provided by the Ministry

impressed me considerably and at the same time awakened in me a new awareness and a new interest in a sector which is usually unexposed to the general public. In my mind many were the questions that started to appear; I began to wonder whether other nations provided for the same kind of service, how these servicemen and women were adequately trained, what the origins of this job were, what role in the world history such a profession had played, what if there were no military interpreters...

The road I had to cover to answer these questions has been long and sometime bumpy, but at the end it was worth it the efforts. My deep appreciation and my true commendation with regard to the Armed Forces helped me not to give up when facing the challenges.

This is how my research began.

February 2, 2005

Roberta Fontana

INTRODUCTION

This work does not have the ambition either to be a successful experiment or an essential enrichment of the manifold interpreting studies. It does not provide technical or scientific results or unimaginable solutions.

This work is a research project which offered me the possibility to explore an unnoticed world. It is a study which tries to cover areas so far unexplored, and it unpretentiously attempts to make a contribution in order that more people could get to know better the reality of *Military Interpreters*.

With *Interpreters In Uniform: An Unnoticed Profession*, I meant to write a functional and pragmatic synopsis which embraces the most relevant aspects of military interpreting and draws a comparison among the main NATO member countries. Who the Military Interpreters are, what their history is, what they do and did, what kind of training they receive, why they were so vital during wars and other conflicts, and why they are so important today in peacekeeping and rebuilding operations, how risky their job is, why we know so little about them. These are some of the questions I intend to analyze and answer in the following pages.

After a first general introduction to the topic and a delineation of the problems it involves, I took a closer look at the history of several nations to detect the first form of military interpreting and its subsequent necessary employment during wartime.

I examined the uneven development of this new profession on the world stage reconstructing the path it followed throughout the centuries to come to an official office. World War I and II set a remarkable benchmark for its evolution and functioned as a launching pad for the creation of the so called “Corps of Military Interpreters” within the future NATO countries.

With the increasing relevance of this military service, on the one hand, and the alliances and interdependence among nations on the rise, on the other, the countries taken into consideration organized themselves distinctively and gave life to military language institutes and schools for the preparation and training of their servicemen and women.

Thus, I decided to take a picture of every single NATO founding country – plus Germany – as to the current training and employment of their military interpreters. The result is a very diversified and multi-faceted situation, the comparison among the different systems is sometime impossible and clearly shows the lack of uniformity in a sector that is delicate and risky as much as precise and professional.

This thesis is divided into two main parts, which present the two major subjects of the topic: the history of military interpreting and the current situation.

Part I includes three chapters dedicated to the overall description of the professional military interpreter, the lack of literature on the subject, the low-profile consideration of this job, the origins of this profession, and the history of the main Corps of Interpreters during the two World Wars.

Part II – divided into three chapters – gives an account, firstly, of the risks, the institutional status, the new duties and challenges of these interpreters in uniform due to the last changes in the world order after the late events of the 20th century.

Secondly, it presents a picture of the current situation of the training and the employment of military interpreters during peacekeeping and rebuilding operations and relief missions, comparing the systems of several NATO member countries. The resulting picture shows clearly the similarities, but above all, the disparities of the different nations due, i.e. to their language, culture, customs, rules, ambitions, past, etc.

Finally, real stories of personal experiences take shape in the last chapter, in which some stakeholders take the floor and reveal funny anecdotes, successful, and even demanding episodes they witnessed during their professional lives.

The choice of which NATO member countries to consider in this analysis has not been accidental, quite on the contrary, it has been guided by a sensible reasoning.

The twelve founding nations of the Atlantic Alliance were most likely to have a larger experience as long as military interpreting is concerned, and therefore be able to provide more materials and information than others.

To this compact group of countries, I decided to add Germany – West Germany became officially member of NATO in 1955 while East Germany entered in 1991 – mainly because of its historical profile during the main wars. Its relevance and its geo-political weight in that period put it under a particular

light, that, from my point of view, could not be avoided. Besides, Germany has been the real inspiration of my work; without the motivating experience gained during my visit to Berlin and the German Ministry of Defense, I would probably be writing about other issues now.

PART I

Military Interpreters in history

Light and shade

Chapter I

THE MILITARY INTERPRETER: AN UNRECORDED PROFESSION

1.1 ABSENCE OF LITERATURE

Whenever we come across the plain word *Interpreter*, we are generally induced to think of specific settings to make it fit. The contexts most commonly associated with this profession are therefore: the EU Institutions, the UN, International organizations, multi-national companies, the trade and the business market.

No surprise then if research on interpreting has traditionally taken simultaneous conference interpreting, consecutive interpreting in the conference setting, liaison interpreting in community and court settings as its starting point, giving them the highest priority over any other form of interpretation. This can easily be corroborated by the many books and essays written on these subjects and accompanied by numerous experiments and tests carried out to bolster as many theories.

Interpreters in classic suits isolated and protected behind the glass of a soundproof booth is the image we all naively share approaching this topic. They have to cope with many

“Translation and interpretation are rarely associated with immediate physical danger. Granted, we may occasionally break a toe over a dictionary, or get electrocuted by an unruly word

challenges: linguistic problems, cognitive constraints, accuracy, speed of elocution, only to name a few, but they certainly do not have to face physical risks or imminent danger.

Little or no attention has so far been given to investigating other fields of this discipline, namely military interpreting. And if Jesús Baigorri reminds us of the lack of information about interpreters – in general – throughout history:

El problema de la escasez de fuentes sobre los intérpretes – endémico a lo largo de buena parte de la historia – sigue planteándose también para el período de entreguerras.

(Baigorri, 2000: 85)

we can only agree that the documentation regarding specifically military interpreters is even more limited.

Such highly charged (and we will see soon why) interpreting assignment is frequently underestimated and unrecorded under the umbrella of the term *interpretation*, while, from my point of view, it should merit specific attention, one reason being that it is one of the most necessary, risky and, above all, ancient form of interpreting, as Henri Van Hoof himself recalls:

L'interprète militaire peut se targuer sans doute de posséder les lettres de noblesse les plus anciennes. Tous les grands conquérants de l'Histoire ont eu recours à ses services.

(Van Hoof, 1962 : 25)

In view of the far reaching terrifying consequences of arm conflicts, wars and any other form of violent massive perpetrations, and in the light of the last tragic world events, I believe there is a strong argument for taking a closer look at the history, the life, the role and the training of these men and

women who, serving their countries bravely, work simultaneously as military linguists quenching disputes, resolving misunderstandings, reaching out for those people whose lives have been torn apart by wars.

The need to turn to interpreters in the military field is for many nations¹ not new at all. It is an integrated part of their historical and cultural background which has developed throughout the centuries according to the changing conditions of the geopolitical arrangements.

Unfortunately, the absence of any literature on this subject² makes even more difficult the attempt to bring to light a profession that started up as a mere and spontaneous improvisation to fill the linguistic gap between different armies. The knowledge of a foreign language, in fact, turned to be a significant strategic resource used by the Ministries of War and the General Staffs during warfare, as it will be exhaustively elucidated in Chapter III.

In part due to this initial lack of consideration and professionalism, in part because of the secrecy that has always surrounded the military sector and the confidential nature of its capability – hence its inner activities and strategies – the

¹ Among the NATO member nations taken into consideration in this thesis, Canada, France, Belgium and Germany have the richest history of military interpreting, which dates back to the middle of the 16th century for Canada, the 18th century for France and the 19th century for Belgium and Germany. Nevertheless, if we want to discover the very first use of interpreters in wartime, we should take even a longer chronological leap and go back to the Egyptian Empire and the Roman Empire, as outlined in Chapter II.

² With the exception of a restricted number of practical manuals and booklets edited by the Belgian, the German, the French and the Dutch Army during the two World Wars.

interpreters in uniform have constantly received a low profile in the records.

In addition, this profession has been on many occasions at the core of criticism and controversies raised by the common association with espionage and counterespionage, which portrayed the interpreter as a traitor or a turncoat.

Based on my investigation of this particular interpreting assignment, and in the absence of almost any literature on the subject, I would like to propose a tentative characterization of this genre of interpreting, starting with the description of its professional profile.

1.2 GENERAL PROFESSIONAL PROFILE

Today, interpreters can be divided into four general categories: conference interpreters; liaison/community interpreters; court/judicial interpreters; and finally military interpreters³.

Conference interpreters, or parliamentary interpreters, are the last to set foot in the great family of interpreters.

Even though this is the most commonly known form of interpreting, it is also the most recent, dating to the end of World War I, when the first international conferences were held for the first time⁴.

³ Delisle & Woodsworth, 1995: 245.

⁴ This will be better explained in Chapter IV.

Conference interpreters work mainly as free-lance in international congresses, diplomatic summits, assemblies, multilateral meetings; or as permanent personnel in international organizations such as the United Nations (UN), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), or the European Union (EU).

On the other hand, and as the term implies, liaison/community interpreters generally work within a community of people, assisting it in its linguistic needs. They are often employed in the business/industry sector, where they mediate between two or more commercial parties who can not speak a common language during business transactions, meetings, foreign visits or business lunches. But they can as well be hired by hospitals, health structures, or immigration offices to bridge the linguistic/cultural gap between a destination community and its immigrants. This is definitely the oldest form of interpreting dating back to time immemorial (as described in the following chapter).

Legal/judicial interpreters perform their duty in courts. They generally carry out a double job, that of interpreter during debates, processes and interrogations, and that of translator of all official documentation (sentences, judicial acts, provisions, etc.).

The interpreter must swear an oath any time the legal cause in question requires it, or when he/she is employed permanently by a specific court.

As to the core of the matter, – military interpreters – the common question that can come to mind approaching this category is whether a military interpreter is to be considered more as an interpreter or more as a military person.

Henri Van Hoof gives us an undoubtedly clear-cut answer to this question: “L’interprète militaire est avant tout soldat” (1962 :26).

First and foremost a person in uniform is a soldier, a sailor, or an airman. He/she is trained to carry out the specific duties of his/her ‘trade’ – be it to shoot a rifle, steer a ship or strafe a convoy. Operating as a linguist/interpreter comes second to those priority duties. However, when acting as an interpreter in the military field, one is expected to be as good as any professional civilian interpreter (Anderson, 2000: 1).

Chapter IV will describe in detail this profession, yet it is necessary to anticipate a few of its characteristics to better have a first clear picture.

We can assert that military interpreting is one of the oldest forms of interpretation in history. Today, with the term *Military Interpreter* we generally refer to a specific professional figure recognized as a non-commissioned officer who has received – either within the national Military Language School or any other language institute – a specific higher education training necessary to bridge the linguistic and cultural gap between different parties⁵. Military interpreters generally find themselves to perform their duty under dangerous, emergency, or delicate circumstances, knowing that a linguistic

⁵ According, generally, to NATO STANAG Language Proficiency Standard, described in Chapter V.

misunderstanding or a wrong translation can literally cause a war.

We said that a military interpreter is first of all a soldier, but beside all military duties, a good self-respecting military interpreter could not be other than both things at once – all the more that a professional interpreter in this field can not make do simply with a comprehensive general knowledge, but he/she must have an excellent proficiency in the lexicon of this sector, in its specific terminology. For instance, the interpreter in uniform must know extremely well everything that is linked with the armaments and their technological development⁶, all the ranks, organization and hierarchy, rules and orders, administration, healthcare, transportation and logistics that classify the Armed Forces, etc. A military interpreter must also be up-to-date with any development in the technology of the armaments as well as with the evolution of the various geo-strategic and geo-politic situations in crisis zones of the world.

At the same time – given his/her responsibility in the role of mediator during wars or any other conflicts, on the one hand, and in sensitive peace negotiations and relief missions, on the other⁷ – the interpreter who works for the military must be highly trusted and reliable. If we consider the fact that in the

⁶ Cappelli,, 2004: 1-2.

⁷ It is worth underlying that the two contexts – wars and Peace Support Operations – are two well-separated realities. As Chapter III and IV will exhaustively describe, the former reflects a belligerency status, in which the interpreter is called to act mostly as a spy, interrogator, translator of intercepted documents, and mediator with the opponent party, i.e. during World War I and II. The latter instead, represents primarily a post-conflict scenario, in which the interpreter must carry out tasks relating to local population assistance, humanitarian aid, and linguistic liaison between allies, i.e. peacekeeping operations in Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Iraq.

past⁸ these interpreters were employed in the military intelligence – in activities of espionage and counterespionage – and during the interrogation and the placing of prisoners⁹, we can understand why trust, reliance and competence in the military field were of such a vital importance.

As we will see in the second part of this thesis, education, training and employment of military interpreters differs from state to state according to national practices and rules. Some nations – Italy included – had not provided its Armed Forces with interpreters until recently, and never had a historical Corps of Military Interpreters, while other countries – especially Belgium, France or Germany – have kept a sound record of this profession since World War I.

As to their engagement, military interpreters can be employed mainly on two fronts: at the national level – namely within the Defense sector – and on the world stage, accompanying the respective Armed Forces during peacekeeping operations or rebuilding and relief missions. Frequently, and especially at the institutional level, in Ministries and Departments, military interpreters are replaced by civil personnel who carry out tasks that range from translating military documents to conference interpreting in international meetings. In the latter scenario as an alternative, the military can employ local people to meet the need of communicating with native communities. Chapter IV will enter into more details on this subject.

⁸ Mainly during the two World Wars.

⁹ Baigorri 2000: 25.

As said previously – from a deontological perspective – military interpreting implies a significant level of trust and reliance, while – from a cognitive point of view – it requires considerable accuracy and specific knowledge. But there are other unnoticed constraints of this discipline that may influence interpreter performance and are, therefore, worthy of recognition and consideration. In the following section I will try to analyze these aspects.

1.3 A DISTINCT INTERPRETING ASSIGNMENT

The vast majority of interpreting research has been, and continues to be, devoted to investigating cognitive aspects of interpreter performance, for example mental overload, attention span, and the effect on interpreter performance of variables such as increased input rate, heavily accented speech, environmental noise and so on¹⁰ in simultaneous conference settings.

Little attention has so far been given to investigating constraints which arise from the nature of the role played by military interpreters in warfare or during peacekeeping operations around the world, and the pressure put on them by specific geo-political settings¹¹.

¹⁰ Baker 1997: 113.

¹¹ The only information available on this aspect can be collected from the personal memories of the interpreters of political leaders and dictators such as Churchill, Hitler, and Stalin (see Chapter VI).

As a matter of fact, highly sensitive contexts which involve interpreting for important political leaders or for the highest ranking officers of different armies – at times of great international crises – are likely to be subject to various types of non-cognitive constraints which may influence interpreter performance in specific way. Psychological and cultural constraints – especially stress – characterize mostly interpreter choices and strategies in facing situations that could shape the course of history. Military interpreters in these settings, in fact, work at times of political tensions, controversy and contentious issues experiencing highly stressful moments or encounters in which they still must show an extra deal of calm and self-control.

Somebody may argue that these challenges could equally be applied to any interpreting setting asserting that psychological and cognitive stress are the two sides of the same coin.

This argumentation can be easily dismissed if we consider the fact that the stress experienced in the context of military assignments in such operations results from the crucial period of the negotiations and the political tension and acrimony that often pervade these situations, not only from a cognitive overload. Mona Baker gives us a clear delineation of the problem:

The notion of stress is occasionally discussed in the literature, but the definition given there is inherited from the days when researchers were preoccupied with simultaneous conference interpreting. Because the

simultaneous interpreter in conference setting is almost completely shielded from the kind of psychological stress that results from being a visible participant in an adversarial exchange. “Stress” in interpreting research has so far been seen from a purely cognitive and physical perspective. For instance, writers on interpreting typically list as examples of stress “the constant information load during interpretation, the confined environment of the interpreting booth, fatigue, and the effects of environmental noise”

(Baker, 1997: 114)

Stress can arise from the awareness of the seriousness of the context and the awesome moral and historical responsibility the military interpreter feels upon him/her. At the same time though, the main cause of stress may be the monitoring of the interpreter’s linguistic performance by the same “clients” he/she works for.

As a matter of fact, it happens sometimes that senior officers or political leaders are not (or pretend not to be) linguistically ‘handicapped’ and want to monitor the interpreter’s performance even correcting, suggesting or at times overshadowing the mediator¹².

Finally, we must not forget the stress due to the dangerous conditions of the context, the political instability of the region or the exposure to unavoidable risks. Nevertheless this should be considered as an integrated part of the military profession, hence a separate aspect.

¹² Personal communication.

Since no attention has been given so far to this facet of the military capability, I believe the best way to understand such a psychological pressure is that of recalling the memories of the interpreters of political leaders in crucial historical moments.

H. Morgan gives us an account of the challenges met by the interpreter Whitelaw Reid during the negotiations to end the Spanish-American War, describing an ‘intimate’ dinner between the Spanish Ambassador Castillo and the Marquis Comillas:

Comillas looked as if he were being robbed of his last penny [...] Our conversation had by this time become almost dramatic in its intensity. All three of us were standing. Castillo was frequently touching my shoulder, or grasping my coat lapel in the earnestness of his gesticulations”

(Morgan, 1965: 97)

Aziza Molyneux-Berry¹³ reveals us instead the emotions felt interpreting live an Iraqi statement for ABC News during the Gulf War:

When I had finished, it struck me that I was interpreting live to approximately 250 million Americans, who were hanging on my every word to hear whether it was going to be war or peace.

(Molyneux-Berry, 1991: 10)

¹³ Aziza Molyneux-Berry is a translator and interpreter of Arabic. She is a member of the Institute of Translation and Interpretation (ITI) Council and coordinator of their Arabic network.

Beside this couple of examples, important memories are collected in the books written by famous interpreters in history such as: Paul Schmidt, Valentin Berezhtkov, and Alexander Bogomolow, who gave their services to great political leaders or dictators. Chapter VI will present their experiences.

1.4 KNOWLEDGE AND CULTURE

Communication is the fundamental basis for the success of any mission involving negotiations or the reaching of an agreement among different communities. This is even truer in tragic, dramatic circumstances like the consequences of an armed conflict. Communication consists of several layers, with verbal/written, non-verbal and cultural components. Culture includes the values, customs, and traditions which members of a group or organization share.

The bridge to overcome the linguistic/cultural divide between two or more peoples is represented in this scenario by military interpreters. The binomial 'language mastery – interpreter's activity' appears obvious. Yet, there are other characteristics shared by all those who find themselves to be a bridge between cultures.

One of the most crucial tools required to effectively accomplish any mission where multiple languages and cultures are

involved is the ability to communicate one's ideas, goals, and objectives while sustaining mutual understanding and respect for each other's customs and cultural sensitivities. To achieve this requires a competent, professional military interpreter who is knowledgeable of much more than merely the right or the wrong word. According to Taft (1981: 73), the interpreter must have competence in at least 4 aspects of culture, namely:

- 1) Knowledge of society. It is fundamental to know customs, uses, habits, traditions, and history of a community, to avoid misunderstandings and unpleasant or awkward situations;
- 2) Communication competence. Communication is divided into verbal/written and non-verbal. Verbal communication refers to the language of a specific community, with its syntax, lexicon, semantics, grammar, phonetics, spelling, etc. while, non-verbal communication is subtler, and it is composed of at least two types, physis and symbolic. For instance, the military interpreter makes him/herself seen conspicuously by the population to gain its trust, or tries to maintain transparency to all parties, whereas combat troops – for strategic reasons – do exactly the opposite: they camouflage their positions and maintain the security of communications;
- 3) Technical competence. The ability to adapt quickly to rituals and manners of a specific community. The interpreter must be proactive in becoming knowledgeable about and in taking part in the customs and activities of the country he/she is working in, thus improving his/her experience and confidence in dealing with his/her counterparts;

- 4) Social competence to act adequately in the appropriate social roles corresponding to a community. The knowledge of how social and business practices function, and how to behave in different environments is extremely relevant in an interpreter's activity.

Solid, thorough preparation for dealing with an unfamiliar culture can often mean the difference between success and failure in military missions.

1.5 COMMON MISTRUST

Due to the nature of interpreting, misunderstandings can often arise from the misperception of the interpreter as “liaison”, that is as a means of communication to establish and maintain mutual understanding and cooperation, i.e. between parts of an armed force.

Unfortunately, this obligatory interrelationship destined to fill the linguistic and cultural gap between different parties – “L’interprète n’existe qu’en fonction d’une séparation. Il est le truchement ou trucheman, comme on l’appelait jadis” (Van Hoof, 1962: 9) – is at times considered fallacious.

As a matter of fact, the interpreter's role – to pass and receive contextually correct information in the target languages and more generally, to make intellectual dialogue possible – has been constantly jeopardized by worries of possible voluntary or involuntary misinterpretations and distortions.

The common association *translator-traitor* is as old as the first documented form of translation/interpretation – dated back to over 3000 B.C.¹⁴ – and has always been included in the myriad of studies conducted on these disciplines.

The examples of this mistrust are various throughout our history; even the Roman Empire was not free from this feeling:

PLINIUS preist jene glücklich, die nicht
von *interpretes* abhängen: *Felices illos quorum
fides et industria non per internuntios et
interpretes... probabantur!*

(Plin. Paneg. 19, 4) Und CICERO klagt darüber,
daß Interpreten Unsicheres deuten können, wie
sie wollen (Cic. divin. 1, 18).

(Kurz, 1986: 216)

The belief that the translator/interpreter may obviously adulterate the content of the message to be transposed, adding sugar to the original or bittering it acrimoniously, has been scarcely left out of the preoccupations of the contracting parties, above all in the military field.

In this sector in fact, military interpreters have at times had a doubtful reputation in history due to their primary employment in the intelligence services. They were looked at with suspicion and mistrust not only by the opposite party, but also among their coalition or belonging group, for political as well as security reasons.

¹⁴ See Chapter II, 2.1.

This is one of the roots for which, especially under the grim umbrage of the two World Wars and the Cold War, during bilateral meetings and public events each delegation provided its own personal interpreter, to avoid unpleasant mishaps and disagreeable circumstances.

Nowadays – with the exception of diplomatic negotiations (Baker, 1997: 113) – the interpreter is usually provided by the host country and is a member of the host community. Nevertheless, particularly in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, there is still the habit of bringing one's own interpreter to such meetings.

But the very negative perception of the interpreters is felt and described also during the Nuremberg Trials – the real first test-bed for simultaneous interpreting in history – in which the complexity of the linguistic problem overshadowed at times the juridical character of the proceedings.

One of the tortures of this trial has been the language used by the interpreters into English [...] Translators are a race apart – touchy, vain, unaccountable, full of vagaries, puffed up with self-importance of the most explosive kind, inexpressibly egotistical, and, as a rule, violent opponents of soap and sunlight [...]

(Koch, 1994: 1)

1.6 INTELLIGENCE SERVICES

As previously said, the suspicion for possible espionage due to infiltrators interpreters has sound grounds in history.

The role of military interpreters has always been associated correctly with the Intelligence Services, and it is easy to understand soon why.

Intelligence is generally defined as confidential information prepared for the use of policy makers. The information springs from a variety of sources, such as spies or codebreakers, and is analyzed and written up by evaluators, such as officers or army staff.

Intelligence was used from the earliest days, as references in the Bible to scouting out the land of Canaan make clear, and as do the practices of ancient tribal peoples such as the Jívaro of Ecuador who crept into enemy villages to count houses and thus estimate the size of the enemy forces. Further examples can be found in ancient China and India with Sun Tzu and Kautilya (Kahn, 1967). But intelligence reached its full potential only after the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution, and it achieved permanent importance in World War I and II.

The Geneva Conventions sanctioned an important step into the regularization of international Intelligence Services, providing for a series of universal agreements to be respected in the case of war or other conflict. On the basis of these arrangements, many were the nations that created special language institutes to train military interpreters, interrogators and translators.

The Geneva Convention represents a series of international agreements that created the International Red Cross and

developed humanitarian law intended to protect wounded combatants and civilians during times of war or other conflicts. The campaign for such laws began with the publication *Un Souvenir de Solferino* (A Memory of Solferino, 1862; translated 1911) by Swiss philanthropist Jean Henri Dunant, describing the suffering of wounded soldiers at the northern Italian battlefield of Solferino in June 1859. The League of Red Cross Societies was founded in Paris, France, in 1919. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is a separate Swiss organization empowered with international authority. The symbol of the red cross was chosen in honor of the Swiss flag, with reversed colors to show a red cross on a white background. Several Islamic countries chose to use a red crescent instead and are called the Red Crescent Societies.

There have been four Geneva Conventions, each subsequently amended. The first Geneva Convention was adopted in 1864 and provided for protection of sick and wounded soldiers on the field of battle. The second convention, formulated in 1868, extended those protections to sailors wounded in sea battles. The third convention, in 1929, protected prisoners of war. It legislated that prisoners of war were not criminals and should be treated humanely and released at the end of hostilities. The fourth convention, ratified in 1949, rewrote, expanded, and replaced the language of the first three conventions. It also called for the protection of civilians during wartime. It brought civilians under the protection of international laws that prohibit murder, torture, hostage-taking, and extra-judicial sentencing and executions. In 1977, two protocols were added to the Geneva Conventions of 1949, extending protection to victims of conflicts not formally declared as wars and to victims of

civil conflict within a state. In each category, protection extends to the medical, religious, and humanitarian aid personnel helping affected groups. As of June 1993, 178 states were signatories to the 1949 Conventions, with 61 ratifications. The League of Red Cross/Red Crescent Societies, along with the member states of the Geneva Conventions, meets every five years¹⁵.

The Geneva Conventions attempted to regularize a sector which, until that moment, was quite ambiguous and ill-defined, by bringing officially to light espionage and information schools in several countries of the world.

Going back to the Intelligence Services, intelligence sources can be grouped into different kinds¹⁶, but I believe the most glamorous and yet least reliable source is definitely the spy.

The records of military interpreters engaged in espionage services as spies and codebreakers are rich and colorful but they undoubtedly raise an umbrage of mistrust around this profession. The problem existed in the past as much as it does today.

Leaving aside the ancient history and focusing on the 20th century, World War II and the Cold War represented the fertile soil for the sprouting of real “spy schools” in which interpreters, translators and interrogators were trained by the

¹⁵ Geneva Convention."Microsoft® Encarta® Encyclopedia 2001. © 1993-2000 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.

¹⁶ HUMINT, or human intelligence; IMINT, or imagery intelligence; SIGINT, or signal intelligence:
[Hhttp://www.college.hmco.com/history/readerscomp/mil/html/mh_024800_intelligence.htm](http://www.college.hmco.com/history/readerscomp/mil/html/mh_024800_intelligence.htm)
(consulted in October 2004).

different armies to optimize resources and deploy forces more effectively.

A clear example of this ‘hush-hush’ education can be the training at Camp Savage – Minnesota, U.S.A. – opened in 1942, in which many servicemen from the 100th and the 442nd Battalion were sent to be trained for the MIS (Military Intelligence Service). The purpose of the camp was to improve the foreign language skills of the Japanese American Soldiers¹⁷.

These Nisei – that is people born in Japan and educated in the United States – servicemen were going to school instead of going to war. When they graduated, they became part of the MIS. Nisei soldiers arrived at Camp Savage and began to study hard and learn how to speak Japanese correctly and fluently. After an intense course – 9 hours a day with a 90 minute lunch break and 2 ½ hour dinner break – they became spies, translators, interpreters and interrogators¹⁸ for the U.S. Army.

Another similar example can be collected in the decades following the second main war, during the Cold War, on the British side.

Amid the ever-present fears of a Soviet attack, the British government ordered, in 1951, the creation of the Joint Services School for Linguists (JSSL), that is a Russian language school to transform servicemen into clandestine radio intercept operators, interpreters and interrogators.

¹⁷ Generally, second generation Americans descendants of Japanese immigrants, or born in Japan.

¹⁸ Information taken from: http://www.k12.hi.us/~gt/cyberfair2/training/training_camps.htm (consulted in October 2004).

It operated from military camps in Cornwall, Scotland, as well as in Coulsdon and also created special enclaves at Cambridge and London universities, force-feeding bright young men with Russian to groom them for the world of espionage. Between 1951 and 1960, that is in the 9 years of its existence, the JSSL pushed 5,000 young servicemen through intensive training to meet the need of British intelligence¹⁹.

Even more 'neutral' nations such as Norway were not free from this type of training. In 1954, under the Geneva Conventions on Prisoners of War (mentioned above), Norway also decided to train interrogation personnel in case of a war with the Soviet Union, and established its first military Russian course that gave birth to linguists (interrogators, interpreters and translators) for the reserve formations of its Armed Forces. Such a course was later (1959) placed under the Army School of Intelligence and Security – now the Norwegian Defense School of Intelligence and Security, NORDISS.

This course, with the necessary adjustments, is still running today and, due to the recent transformations of the world order and the greater focus on other hot areas of the world, it has been echoed by an Arabic course as well.²⁰

If in the period of the Cold War the fear of enemy intrusions was surely justified – given the organization put together to achieve this very goal – nowadays the situation seems to have changed only as to the languages involved.

¹⁹ Information taken from: [Hhttp://www.thisishertfordshire.co.uk/misc/print.php?artid=413496](http://www.thisishertfordshire.co.uk/misc/print.php?artid=413496) (consulted in October 2004).

²⁰ Personal communication.

Instead of Russian or Japanese, today much of the effort is concentrated on the Arabic language, since threats are perceived to come from countries speaking that language. The shortage of Arabic-speaking interpreters in many nations but primarily in the United States, in this new world order post 9/11, brought about new difficulties²¹, which far from being only linguistic, have consequences on the already fragile international geo-political scenario.

The case of Guantanamo Bay (2003) illustrates once again the importance of reliable, trustworthy interpreters in a sector from which peace, stability, security and their antonyms depend largely. To cite a couple of examples: “Guantanamo Bay Interpreters May Have Sabotaged Interviews” entitled *The New York Times* on Tuesday, October 7, 2003²², while on September 25, 2003 the *WorldNetDaily* wrote “U.S. officials warned of lack of reliable, American-born²³ interpreters”²⁴.

The allegation – then turned into arrest and execution of charges –towards the Arabic-speaking interpreters in Guantanamo was that of espionage and security violations. Arab-born military interpreters and interrogators would have given their countries information about the detainees and the interrogations.

²¹ This issue will be described in Chapter IV.

²² Information taken from: [Hhttp://www-tech.mit.edu/V123/N46/long2_Guantanamo.46.html](http://www-tech.mit.edu/V123/N46/long2_Guantanamo.46.html)H (consulted in October 2004).

²³ The associations ‘native – reliance’ and ‘alien – deception’ are very nationalistic and very much frequent in the average American’s mind. Unfortunately, they may be fallacious and naïve. This is another subject though, and it should be discussed in another context.

²⁴ Information taken from: [Hhttp://www.worldnetdaily.com/news/printer-friendly.asp?ARTICLE_ID=34775](http://www.worldnetdaily.com/news/printer-friendly.asp?ARTICLE_ID=34775)H (consulted in October 2004).

In the light of what has been said, written and done during wartime to catch the enemy at fault and get the better of the situation using deceitful stratagems such as spies under the guise of interpreters, the old saying “translator-traitor” has never been so appropriate and justified.

Unfortunately, the shortage of literature regarding the world of military interpreting does not help arguing this belief. As we are all aware, ignorance and the lack of objective information on any topic allows our minds to dream and elaborate the few facts and stories brought to light, often deforming the reality and taking for granted details that are far from being assumed.

This is only a piece of the giant puzzle building the picture of the interpreters in uniform. Maybe it is the most annoying and irritating one, but in the whole representation I will put together in the next chapters I will show it to be only a flaw.

1.7 FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS

The vacuum of information regarding the linguistic aspects of the military capability that I tried to analyze so far can be also perceived, more generally, from the news we hear or read every day on television or in the papers.

Military interventions such as those in the Balkans as well as in Central Asia, together with the new world order generated by 9/11, have presented and gave body to the problem of the interface among different Forces²⁵.

²⁵ What follows is the list of all the wars and conflicts going on in the world today which involve multi-forces international coalitions:

Many nations began to interact more closely than in the past, while the media sorted out terms like “Coalition Forces”, “Alignment Forces” or “Alliance Forces” to describe new and old unions.

Unfortunately, these affected and sometimes vague neologisms hide the concrete problems of such coalitions, one being the significant barrier of the linguistic communication between armed forces of different nations. In other words, nations and their armies cooperate closely but who knows how linguistically they manage to do that!

These forms of cooperation, in fact, can range from the mutual support – different tasks are assigned to different armies, such as healthcare or food supply – to multi-forces operations in which the armies engaged come from different countries, to the very communication, that is the exchange of documentation in a common language or the linguistic interface during meetings and encounters²⁶.

The unseen and unnoticed work of interpreters and translators behind the curtains of these Coalition Forces is therefore vital and restless. And even though the media does not pay much attention to this point, to the extent that without communication there can be no negotiation, communication – hence the presence of linguists in the armies – is obviously integral to the success of any mission.

Chechnya, Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda, Iraq, Nepal, Colombia, Rwanda, Kashmir, Burundi, Sudan, Afghanistan, Angola, Algeria, Middle East, Philippines, Burma, Liberia, Somalia, Ethiopia-Eritrea, India, Macedonia, Sri Lanka, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, West Papua, Kurdistan, Senegal, Chiapas, Cote d’Ivoire, Central African Republic. Information taken from: <http://www.warnews.it> (consulted in January 2005).

²⁶ Cappelli, 2004: 1-2.

With this final consideration the introduction to the history, training and role of military interpreters comes to an end.

As I tried to illustrate, light and shade define a world – the world of military interpreters – that is self-sufficient, independent and largely undiscovered. Various are the inner reasons for this secrecy, but the general disinterest from scholars and particularly from the academic setting to investigate it remains partly unclear and unjustified.

My intention is to break this wall of unconcern; the following research is my tool.

Chapter II

MILITARY INTERPRETERS IN HISTORY: THE OUTSET

2.1 THE DRAGOMAN OR TRUCHEMENT: AN ACTIVITY FROM TIME IMMEMORIAL

The origins of the word *interpretem/inter-pres* – in the Latin meaning ‘between’²⁷ – stem from the Assyrian term *terjuman* and the Aramaic word *targum*. In the 17th century, the name commonly used for interpreters was *truchement* or *trucheman*.

This term, with its variant in *dragoman* in eastern Europe and especially in Turkey

– is nothing but a deformation of the Arabic word *tercüman* (pronounced ‘terjuman’) – still in use in present-day Turkish – which in its turn, comes once again from Assyrian and Aramaic²⁸.

A curious thing with respect to this is the fact that many European languages adapted the northern Turkish word *tilmac*

“L’interprète militaire peut se targuer sans doute de posséder les lettres de noblesse les plus anciennes. Tous les grandes conquérants de l’Histoire ont eu recours à ses services”.

²⁷ The etymological origins of this word are doubtful and unclear. If the particle *inter* means assuredly *between*, different meanings are assigned to the root word *pret/prat* in Latin, Greek, Gothic as *intelligence, saying, knowing, explaining, transforming, negotiating, mediating, business*. Information taken from: Vocabolario Etimologico della Lingua Italiana, Copyright 2004, all rights reserved, H<http://www.etimo.it>H (consulted in January 2005).

²⁸ Information taken from: H<http://www.aiic.net/ViewPage.cfm/article1204.htm>H (consulted in October 2004), and Van Hoof, 1962: 9.

(deriving from *talami*, a word in Mitanni, the Assyro-Babylonian language of 15th century B.C.) to indicate the interpreter in their respective languages²⁹; for example, we have *tolmatch* in Russian, *prevodatch* in Bulgarian, or *Dolmetsch(er)* in German.

The reason is simply explained; for a very long time – the Middle Ages and part of modern history – among western and Christian nations the need of institutionalized interpreting was felt little, since there was the possibility of using Latin as a common language. Even though this activity made its first appearance in Egypt (3000 B.C.), in the western world and in the Christian countries it became a necessity only in the 14th century, as soon as the relations with the Ottoman Empire started to tremble and the western nations came across the very influential Turkish *dragomans*, that is the first form of institutional diplomatic interpreters.

These *dragomans* or interpreters-officers were appointed by local authorities and had to carry out the most delicate missions, such as peace negotiations or diplomatic operations; they could also work as personal secretaries of the King. They were highly appreciated and praised within their community. Their influential job derived from the fact that, in the beginning, the Ottoman Empire never negotiated in writing, but exclusively orally³⁰, and these men represented almost the only diplomatic channel to communicate with other groups of people.

²⁹ Kallee, 1911: 5.

³⁰ Van Hoof, 1962: 16.

Can we define these *dragomans* recalled in history as military interpreters? In a certain way, yes we can. On the basis of their common interdependence, reliance and their generally shared operations field, military interpreting and diplomatic interpreting have always gone hand in hand, to the point that, at times, the two disciplines even overlapped each other – NATO is certainly a self-explaining example, a context in which servicepersons work officially in a diplomatic institution .

With the term *diplomacy*, we refer to practices and institutions by which nations conduct their relations with one another. Originally, the English term *diplomatics* referred to the care and evaluation of official papers or archives, many of which were treaties. In the 18th century diplomatic documents increasingly meant those pertaining to international relations, and the term *diplomatic corps* was used to signify the body of ambassadors, envoys, and officials attached to foreign missions³¹.

Today, military and diplomatic interpreting careers have many times fuzzy borders. They interact with each other in some circumstances (NATO, UN Military Observers' Missions, etc.), while in others they tend to proceed in parallel but diverse paths (peacekeeping and rebuilding operations). Yet in the past, and especially at the outset of this profession, these two services were not even separated. As the following section elucidates, kings, commanders and conquerors throughout the whole human history, made use of their linguistically-trained military personnel as ambassadors, people responsible of

³¹ 'Diplomacy' *Microsoft® Encarta® Encyclopedia 2001*. © 1993-2000 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.

foreign affairs, mediators in disputes, peacemakers or personal secretaries, in other words as *diplomatic corps*.

The first form of diplomacy in Europe date back to the Ancient Greece (3000 B.C.-100 B.C.), the Roman Empire (27 B.C.-476 A.D.), and subsequently to the increasing importance of the Catholic Church and its evangelization mission in the early centuries (4th and 5th century A.D.).

However, if these examples could be considered as the first orderly system of diplomacy – which disappeared completely during the Middle Ages – we definitely have to go beyond the European borders to find its inconsistent and irregular roots. We have to take a time leap backward of 5000 years with the Middle East as a destination. According to historical documentation, the Middle East can be considered as the cradle of diplomatic/military interpretation³².

2.2 THE ORIGINS OF MILITARY/DIPLOMATIC INTERPRETING

The origins of military interpreting date back to the outset of all other forms of interpretation.

It is true to say that the military interpreter can historically boast the oldest references – since all the big conquerors in history, from Julius Caesar to Napoleon, to Hitler, made full

³² Thieme, Hermann & Glässer, 1956: 12-13.

use of his services – but when we consider the very birth of this profession, we step into a common background with shadowy borders.

The interpreter role, as we understand it today – that is with an academically recognized qualification in the field or with a solid training or background based on specific techniques – is quite recent. Nevertheless, its function has always existed, simply because speaking has always come before writing.

It is worth noting though, that the first form of interpreting did not develop as a means to fill the linguistic gap between two or more peoples, but to meet the needs of a single community.

In the Ancient Greece for instance, the Homeric poems were declaimed way before being written on paper. In Egypt, the letters to the Pharaoh were memorized by the messengers who had the duty to deliver them. The Jews as well as the Muslims handed on orally the Talmud or the Koran respectively from one generation to another³³.

We can certainly evince that interpretation is much older than translation. But does it date back to time immemorial?

In the falling apart of the Tower of Babel – symbol of a breaking within a universal linguistic unity – we have constantly seen a precedent anytime different linguistic groups have felt the need to communicate with other communities.

The Bible is definitely a huge source of information to this respect. In fact, the Holy Book gives an account of the appearance of the very first interpreters in human history. Far away from being what today we understand by an interpreter,

³³ Van Hoof, 1962: 10 and Delisle & Woodsworth, 1995: 161.

these people were sacred liturgical servants enjoying big consideration within their communities.

In Nehemiah 8,8, for instance, the Bible tells us that the Books containing the Law of God were translated on the spot by the Levites from Hebrew to Aramaic to make them more accessible to the believers. In the temple, the Holy Books were often recited in a whisper, while the translation was read aloud, with a method that, in a certain way, prefigured modern simultaneous interpretation.

In this particular conception of the interpreter function, we must see a certain supernatural power given by ordinary mortal people to those who knew another language.

Interpreting was perceived almost as a magical activity to be used at the service of gods or sovereigns. Interpreters were erudite people, considered as special messengers, respected as dedicated liturgical men, honored as divine souls³⁴.

This is probably the only circumstance in which interpreters were required for a service that did not involve relations or contacts with foreign communities; nevertheless their importance must not be underestimated.

The history of interpreting reveals not only the antiquity of its function but also its variety. Serving the faith is the oldest example, but there are various others: supporting military conquests, assisting commercial expansions, cooperating with the justice or interceding for the diplomacy; everything traces the role that will be played by the interpreters of the 20th and

³⁴ Delisle & Woodsworth, 1995: 7 and Van Hoof, 1962: 10.

21st century³⁵. It is worth summarizing its origins and its development throughout the centuries.

2.2.1 The Egyptians

If the examples seen so far were the very first forms of interpreting within a single community, it is with the first Pharaohs and the Egyptian Empire of 3000 B.C. that the act of interpreting turned into a means of communicating with foreign peoples, and came to a profane domain, serving mainly military and diplomatic aims.

The bilingualism of the border region in the northern part of the Egyptian Empire – in which Egyptians and Nubians coexisted –brought about the appearance of the first interpreters recalled in human history. These people were gloriously decorated with the name of ‘Chief Interpreters’ and formed a separate dynasty, as Herodotus mentions in his books³⁶.

From the travel diaries of 2500 B.C. by a prefect and intimate friend of King Nefererkera, it can be learnt that the Egyptians accompanied their great military expeditions against desert plunderers with interpreters, while other interpreters were embarked on ships to Asia for commercial purposes.

During the same period, The Egyptians availed themselves of interpreters also in their copper mines in the Sinai region – as corroborated by ancient inscriptions deciphered in the old capital Memphis. The Egyptians, in fact, were the first people to conceive an international diplomatic language. The clay

³⁵ Thieme, Hermann & Glässer, 1956: 16-17.

³⁶ Thieme, Hermann & Glässer, 1956: 18.

tablets discovered in El-Amarna state that this language was Accadic³⁷.

Even though the Egyptians were the first people to bring into being the interpreting service and to conceive methods aiming at spreading out foreign languages – young Egyptians were sent to Hellenic colony families by the Nile to learn Greek – apparently, the mere concept of interpretation never appeared in their documents. Nevertheless, a specific hieroglyphic signifying “interpreting” was used³⁸ (Appendix 1).

Those who practiced this activity were conferred with a special title and due to their social function as mediators and their deep erudition, these men enjoyed a high degree of respect, prestige, praise and devotion among the belonging community and the pharaohs they served, to the point that several Egyptian pharaohs’ tombs presented, on their walls, carved depictions and written descriptions of episodes involving the departed person’s interpreters³⁹.

This is the oldest testimony in the history of interpreting, confirmed also by the Book of Genesis (Gn 42,23), in which it is said that Joseph, after recognizing his brothers who came to Egypt to buy grain, made cunningly use of an interpreter to talk to them, to understand from their free thoughts the degree of sincere responsibility and remorse they felt for what they had done years before.

The earliest evidence of the use of interpretation are also inscriptions found on tombs of the princes of Elephantine,

³⁷ Delisle & Woodsworth, 1995: 8.

³⁸ Delisle & Woodsworth, 1995: 246.

³⁹ Thieme, Hermann & Glässer, 1956: 27 and Delisle & Woodsworth, 1995: 286.

sixth-dynasty princes who lived in a bilingual border region of Pharaonic Egypt⁴⁰ (as described at the beginning of this section).

2.2.2 The Greeks

Among the Greeks instead, the interpreter never had the high profile and the great consideration enjoyed by the Egyptians. The Greeks were undoubtedly acquainted with the usefulness of this service, as showed in Herodotus' writings, or in Saint Augustine's, according to which, Plato came to understand the Egyptian Books and the Holy Books thanks to the mediation of an interpreter during one of his trips to Egypt. But, well aware of their linguistic superiority, the Greeks did not bother to learn a foreign language. They had little respect for the languages of other nations, referring to them as "barbarian"⁴¹, and expected other peoples to learn their own⁴².

Despite the lack of information regarding national interpreters, their engagement in military missions by historical leaders was more than relevant. Xenophon, for example, in the region of the Black Sea made great use of interpreters, while Alexander the Great in his campaigns in Central Asia, was referred to have engaged Persian, Hyrcanian⁴³, Sogdian⁴⁴ and Indian interpreters⁴⁵.

⁴⁰ Kurz, 1986: 213.

⁴¹ Delisle & Woodsworth, 1995: 245.

⁴² Van Hoof, 1962: 12.

⁴³ Hyrcania was a region of the Ancient Persia, to the south-east of the Caspian Sea.

⁴⁴ Sogdiana was a region in southeastern central Asia.

⁴⁵ Van Hoof, 1962: 12 and Thieme, Hermann & Glässer, 1956: 44.

2.2.3 The Romans

In 400 B.C., the Ancient Roman Empire was a bilingual state. Latin and Greek were taught equally in schools, since the knowledge of the latter was a requisite in the background of any well educated Roman.

The interpreter, whose presence in the Roman Senate was a prerogative, held a role of public interest.

The administration of the Roman Provinces in relations with Egyptians, Syrians, Germans, Celts and other peoples, required interpreters in any field. They were paid by the State. They were appointed by the Ministry of Domestic Affairs – the *Magister Officiorum* – and carried out both diplomatic tasks and military activities alongside the Roman Legions in Europe, Asia as well as Africa. Plinius indicates the presence of 130 interpreters only in the Ponto-Caspian region, while other proofs testimony their engagement as far as the limits of the Silk Road⁴⁶.

History unfortunately is often inconsiderate toward these military interpreters who risked their lives and commonly had very unpleasant missions to fulfill serving their chiefs. The list of episodes is long.

Titus Livius recalls that when Italy was invaded by the Gallics in 390 B.C., a Gallic chief empowered an interpreter to challenge to a duel a Roman Commander:

⁴⁶ Van Hoof, 1962: 12-13.

Gallus [...] provocat per interpretem
unum ex Romanis, qui secum ferro decernat⁴⁷

Then, during the Punic Wars, peace negotiations were generally carried out by interpreters. During the second of these wars (207 B.C.) Claudius Nero intercepted a letter by Hasdrubal to Hannibal which was immediately translated by an interpreter before the Senate:

Qui ubi consulem pervenerunt litteraeque
lectae per interpretem sunt [...]⁴⁸

In the same war, Hannibal chose one of his soldiers as interpreter and peacemaker with the Sagunto inhabitants:

Has pacis leges abnuente Alcone
accepturos Saguntinus, Alorcus, vinci animos,
ubi alia vincantur, adfirmans, se pacis eius
interpretem fore pollicetur; erat autem tum miles
Hannibalis, ceterum publice Saguntinis amicus
atque hospes⁴⁹

When, in 202 B.C. Scipio the African and Hannibal met to sign the end of the hostilities, they were both disarmed and accompanied by their respective interpreters:

⁴⁷ Titus Livius 7, 26, 1 in Kurz, 1986: 218.

The Gallic [...], through the interpreter, challenged a Roman to a duel to solve the question.
Translation by Mario Fontana.

⁴⁸ Titus Livius 27, 43, 5 in Kurz, 1986: 218.

Once they reached the consul and read the letters with the assistance of an interpreter [...].
Translation by Mario Fontana.

⁴⁹ Titus Livius 21, 12, 6 in Kurz, 1986: 219.

While Alcone stated that the Sagunto people would not accept these peace conditions, Alcorus affirmed that once everything was lost, also the souls swooned, and promised to become peace interpreter, even though, at the time, he was one of Hannibal's soldiers, as well as a friend and a guest of the Sagunto people. Translation by Mario Fontana.

Summotis pari spatio armatis cum
singulis interpretibus congressi sunt [...] ⁵⁰

No mention with regard to Julius Caesar's interpreters during the war against the Gallics, although it was a very interpreter (Cn. Pompeius) the person sent to Ambiorix to cry for mercy:

[...] Q. Titurius, cum procul Ambiorigem
suos cohortantem conspexisset, interpretem suum
Cn. Pompeium ad eum mittit rogatum, ut sibi
militibusque parcat ⁵¹

Caesar's personal trustworthy interpreter came on stage anytime the Roman Emperor talked with a Roman-friendly Gallic. On those occasions the ordinary interpreters were left aside and the translation was conducted by his personal trusty man, C. Valerius Troucillus:

[...] cotidianis interpretibus remotis per
C. Valerium Troucillum, principem Galliae
provinciae, familiarem suum, cui summam
omnium rerum fidem habebat, cum eo
colloquitur ⁵²

⁵⁰ Titus Livius, 30, 30, 1 in Kurz, 1986: 218.

After stopping the fighters at the same distance, they met with their respective interpreters [...]. Translation by Mario Fontana.

⁵¹ Caes. bell. Gall. 5, 36, 1 in Kurz, 1986: 219.

[...] Once Q. Titurius saw Amorigem addressing his men, he sent to him his interpreter Cn. Pompeium with the request for sparing his life and his soldiers'. Translation by Mario Fontana.

⁵² Caes. bell. Gall. 1, 19, 3 in Kurz, 1986: 219.

[...] He relieved ordinary interpreters of their service and started to talk to him through C. Valerium Troucillum, Chief of the Gaul province, dear friend, and trustworthy man.

Translation by Mario Fontana.

These examples are clear enough to understand the important and delicate role assigned by the Romans to interpreters who, due to the circumstances in which they found themselves to operate, could be considered military. Also Cicero paid tribute to these men in some of his letters⁵³.

2.2.4 Christianity and the Middle Ages

The development of Christianity, the spreading of the Gospel and the preponderance of Latin as official language of the Church added new vigor to the office of interpreter, increasing the need of interpreters in the religious field.

We have already seen how the oral translation of the Holy Books was a consolidated practice within the religious community⁵⁴. These ‘liturgical interpreters’ began later on to travel to evangelize new regions using Greek, Aramaic, Syrian as well as Latin.

In religion, the Middle Ages then brought about a further increase in the number of interpreters following the conversion missions organized by the Roman Church to foreign countries – for example, the mission of Pope Gregory the Great to England in the 6th century – while, in a more profane domain, the western world gave interpreters a special social role to play in this age⁵⁵.

Interpreters were for the first time officially recognized by the State and enjoyed the title of ‘maistre latimier’ by the noble Courts. Here they received all the honors and the esteem of

⁵³Thieme, Hermann & Glässer, 1956: 40.

⁵⁴ Ibidem p. 31-32.

⁵⁵ Van Hoof, 1962: 15.

their Lords. They were entitled to be addressed with honorific adjectives such as: gentle, courageous, wise, courteous, audacious⁵⁶.

A self-explanatory example to this respect, could be provided by Charlemagne, who had at his services an entire formation of converted Saracens working as military interpreters. For the most faithful and dedicated ones the King of the Franks invoked God's blessing⁵⁷.

Modern diplomatic interpretation was yet to be born, but its foundations were well established already in the 14th century.

After the conquest of Constantinople in 1453 by the Turks, the Ottoman Empire gave life to the institution of the *dragomans*, interpreters in all respects, responsible for foreign affairs.

In the wake of this early enterprise as a breeding ground for professional interpreters, many were the examples that followed in the western world.

2.2.5 Renaissance and the Colonial Europe

Despite the presence of interpreters in ancient times, their activity was mentioned and documented only infrequently before the Renaissance.

Interpreting is mentioned with increasing frequency in late Latin and medieval Arabic literature. The need for interpreters both grew and came to be recognized during the Middle Ages: French chroniclers, for example, tell about interpreters during

⁵⁶ Thieme, Hermann & Glässer, 1956: 74-75.

⁵⁷ Van Hoof, 1962: 15.

the Crusades (Delisle & Woodsworth, 1995: 246). This was true to an even greater extent during the Renaissance as humanism kindled an interest in foreign languages, then as Europeans set out on expeditions of exploration, conquest and empire-building.

With the birth of nations and the concomitant development of national languages, recourse to interpreters became more common and references to their work more explicit.

Europeans carried out their missions of exploration and conquest with a sense of conviction and superiority. As they moved through the world, Christianity also spread south to Africa, east to Asia and across the Atlantic to the New World. Missionaries of all denominations used interpreters to win converts⁵⁸.

By the time of the ‘discovery’ of America, Europeans were well aware of the importance of having adequate interpreters to assist them in communicating with the radically different peoples they encountered. When Cortés, for example, set out to conquer Mexico in 1519, he relied on interpreters to assist him not only in his conquest *per se*, but also in his efforts to convert the Indians.

Interpreters helped priests and friars with their work, and this included interpreting for executions. During the expedition to Honduras, Cortés ordered the last Aztec emperor to be hanged along with his cousin the Lord of Tacuba. Before they were hanged, the Franciscan friars commended them to God through the interpreter Doña Marina.

⁵⁸ Delisle & Woodsworth, 1995: 247 and 254.

The French Huguenot expedition to Brazil benefited greatly from a group of interpreters who were already well integrated into the native culture. Unlike the conquistadors, these interpreters inspired the confidence of the inhabitants, and were therefore indispensable to the transactions of French merchants throughout the 16th century⁵⁹.

Examples like the above mentioned flourish also in Africa among the first European missionaries. Yet, even if crucial, interpreters were not readily available. They had to be recruited and this was done according to the mores of the time. In the 16th century and beyond, a favored method was to kidnap natives of the new region and teach them the language of their abductors. This practice was used by famous explorers such as: Columbus, Francisco Hernández de Córdoba, Jacques Cartier, and Francisco Pizarro⁶⁰.

2.3 FROM DRAGOMANS TO MODERN TIME INTERPRETERS

Until the 14th century, western Europe did not feel much the urgency to provide its society with interpreters, simply because the leading class could count on Latin as a common language.

⁵⁹ Delisle & Woodsworth, 1995: 256-258.

⁶⁰ Delisle & Woodsworth, 1995: 258-259 and Pym, 1999.

Latin had functioned as *lingua franca*⁶¹ among western and Christian countries in the Middle Ages and at the beginning of modern history. In this period of time, contacts among different peoples were limited to assemblies whose members – diplomatic personnel, jurists, scientists, clergymen, etc. – used only Latin to communicate.

For an entire millennium, ordinary citizens had not been able to take part either in the government or the administration of justice of their own country, for the understandable reason that they did not know Latin⁶².

This preclusion to public life, alongside with the worsening of the relations with the Muslim countries to the East, brought about the urgent need to establish a linguistically-trained profession.

On the diplomatic/military field, given the economic importance of the Ottoman Empire during the 13th and 14th century, nations such as France – which wanted to enhance its influence in the Orient – decided to echo the training system of interpreters set up by the Turks, and made the profession of *dragoman* hereditary⁶³.

Banally, it could be said that the first institutionalized effort in Europe to train interpreters took place when the East and the West met for a confrontation.

France is the first western nation to give life to what we call today ‘modern diplomatic interpretation’.

⁶¹ With the term *lingua franca*, we generally refer to any of various languages used as common or commercial tongues among peoples of diverse speech.

⁶² Delisle & Woodsworth, 1995: 35.

⁶³ Thieme, Hermann & Glässer, 1956 : 61.

These first dragomans sent to the eastern commercial ports – Constantinople or Smyrna – were not simply interpreters, but mediators in many fields: business, courts, public prosecutor's offices. They were also employed as translators in the French Embassies, or as proxies representing the minister. For the great majority, these men were uneducated mercenaries, without any knowledge of international law or European politics⁶⁴.

Aware of the fact that these men were unable to defend the prestige of French business in the eastern world, in 1699, King Louis XIV issued several orders prescribing the training of French interpreters to carry out such tasks professionally.

According to these laws, every third year six French kids between 9 and 10 years old were sent to Constantinople (and also Smyrna) to learn foreign languages and to set the basis for their future as interpreters⁶⁵.

Formally known as the *Ecole de Péra*, the school attended by the boys was run by Capuchin friars who had settled in the Ottoman capital. The pupils studied Turkish for three years before being recognized as *dil oglani*, literally 'language boys' in Turkish⁶⁶. A better known name for these interpreters in Europe was *dragoman/drogman*.

In 1721 the King established also a system of grants for these pupils, while later on, in 1795 Paris saw the creation of the *Ecole Nationale des Langues Orientales Vivantes*, fundamental

⁶⁴ Van Hoof, 1962: 16-17.

⁶⁵ Edmond, 1845: 2

⁶⁶ Information taken from: <http://www.aiic.net/ViewPage.cfm/article1204.htm> (consulted in October 2004).

for the training of the interpreter/translator officers of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs⁶⁷.

Then, thanks to Napoleon, the French models continued to flourish throughout Europe, enhancing the prestige of the language and the dissemination of its political, social as well as cultural values.

The importance of French in all basic fields of the administration of a country – justice, diplomacy, foreign affairs, trade – was now unquestionable, and after the creation of the Westphalia Kingdom (1807) in the heartland of Germany by the Emperor of France Napoleon, French supplanted Latin and became the new *lingua franca* of Europe⁶⁸.

In order to see the appearance of modern interpreters, there was not only the need to start up a consolidated international life – alongside the existing traditional diplomacy among states – but also the need for a radical evolution in peoples behavior.

The French Revolution and the Napoleonic politics inaugurated this new era.

According to Dollerup (1995: 133), we can propose the Napoleonic Wars (1799-1815) and the Congress of Vienna (1814-1815) as the first international events to see the large-scale employment of interpreters. But by the nature of their trade, their visibility was not high and most of them probably lapsed back into civilian occupations or became liaison officers for their national armies afterwards. Unfortunately their existence is by and large not documented. They were not

⁶⁷ Van Hoof, 1962: 16.

⁶⁸ As section 2.4 outlines.

professional interpreters, but simple talented men who worked as linguistic middlemen among statesmen who had no command of foreign languages⁶⁹.

In this new era following the French Revolution, many were the changes in favor of democracy witnessed by Europe. The political management lost its cosmopolitan aspect, nations moved toward democratic systems, societies wanted to express themselves in their mother-tongue. The decline of nobility implied the disappearance of people of high social standing – clergymen, statesmen, diplomatic officers – from international life, and the appearance of middle class representatives without any knowledge of foreign languages.

The need of interpreters was therefore more and more manifest, also in the light of the piecemeal internationalization of all fields. In 1864 there was the foundation of the International Red Cross, in 1875 the creation of the International Postal Union. Such international organizations multiplied the contacts among people speaking different languages.

A new era of international meetings was opening up, and all nations felt the need to speak in their mother-tongue.

In 1847, Brussels hosted the first international congress of economists and penitentiary administrators, one year later that of agriculture, and in 1853 the international congress of sea meteorological observers⁷⁰.

⁶⁹ Van Hoof, 1962: 18.

⁷⁰ Van Hoof, 1962: 18.

2.4 THE LONG BATTLE AMONG LANGUAGES

On its long way to become a professional and official job, the interpretation career had to adapt, throughout the centuries, to the several changes regarding the influence and relevance of few languages in the international affairs.

If Latin had been for almost a millennium and until the 18th century the *lingua franca* of Europe, its importance was overshadowed by French during the 19th and the first decades of the 20th century, which, on its turn, yielded ground in favor of English right after the First World War.

In what we could call ‘the long battle among languages’, the decision or the practical need to choose one language instead of another as language of diplomacy is based upon several economic as well as geopolitical reasons. In other words, the dominance of one specific language is a reflection of the structure of global relations. The power of a state, an empire, a kingdom over a territory – or on a larger scale, in the international relations – is expressed also by its language, the real visiting card of its culture.

As seen in section 2.3, Latin was the first language to be used as communication bridge among different peoples, as logic consequence of its status within the Roman Empire, and as a result of the dominance of such an Empire in Europe and in the Middle East. During the Middle Ages and the beginning of modern history, this language was commonly used in activities ranging from evangelization, on a religious field, to

commercial transactions, diplomatic missions or military operations, in a more profane domain⁷¹.

The dominance of Latin saw its decline with the beginning of the 18th century, and especially after the Westphalia Treaty (1648), when French started to make its appearance on the diplomatic scenario.

The prestige of this language came primarily from the great diplomatic activity carried out by France under the kingdom of Louis XIV (1643-1715), during which Cardinal Richelieu gave life to a diplomatic service based on the use of French. This functioned as a model for the majority of the western nations⁷².

Among the reasons concurring to the success of this language it is worth mentioning also the argument used by the French and some Francophile North Americans, according to which diplomatic negotiations and documents had to imply precision, clarity and elegance; elements that the French language had abundantly⁷³.

Clearly enough, this argumentation lost its validity later on, as soon as English acquired a diplomatic status similar to that of French.

The predominance of French as the only language chosen by international diplomacy⁷⁴ during important international

⁷¹ Ibidem section 2.2, *The Romans*.

⁷² Baigorri Jalón, 2000: 15.

⁷³ Baigorri Jalón, 2000: 15.

⁷⁴ This does not apply to the United States, which underwrote all Treaties with foreign powers in various languages. The Treaty with France for the cession of Louisiana (1803) was stipulated in French and English. The 1830 Treaty of Commerce and Navigation with the Ottoman Empire was written in Turkish. The 1846 Treaty of Friendship and Commerce with Persia was done in Persian and English. In 1844, a convention with Hesse was written in French and in English. The 1845 convention with Saxony was concluded in German and

meeting, official relations and signing of treaties, continued to be unaltered throughout the 19th and the first two decades of the 20th century.

Nevertheless, English began piecemeal to gain ground, in line with the political rise of Great Britain and – still in a lower degree – of the United States. The definite assault of English on the French monopoly, and the subsequent capitulation of French as language of diplomacy took place during the preparatory sessions of the Paris Peace Conference (1919)⁷⁵.

During the two sessions of January 15, 1919, the French delegation – headed by the President of the Council Georges Clemenceau – and the English counterpart – headed by the British Prime Minister Lloyd George and the American President Woodrow Wilson – raised a controversy on what should be the official language⁷⁶ of the conference. Beyond nationalistic and patriotic reasons, the argumentations were solid on both sides: on the one hand, the French argued in favor of the extreme precision of their language, its use in diplomatic matters for an entire century, besides the fact that the meeting took place in France. On the other, the English supporters – American and British delegations – recognized the role played by French in the past, but asserted the weight of English in the Pacific area, and the new major role of a non-European power which contributed enormously in the war and spoke English, the United States.

English. The 1871 treaty with Italy was written in English and Italian. The successive border agreements with Mexico were all concluded in Spanish and English. (Bowen, 1994:73)

⁷⁵ Baigorri, 2000: 14.

⁷⁶ With the definition ‘official language’ in a multilingual context, it is generally understood the language prescribed or recognized as authorized in the discussions or in the drawing up of documents.

The solution to what Baker – Wilson’s Press Secretary at the time – named *the battle between languages* (1922)⁷⁷, came with the equalization of the two languages as both official⁷⁸.

As we can evince, this double official character brought about the necessity to interpret and translate into the *other* language respectively all interventions and all documents.

The interpreting services of the conference could not be other than improvised, due to the last-minute decision to have two official languages. The lack of experience and the poor technical conditions of the time obliged the newly-fledged interpreters to learn their job on the spot. Despite the makeshift situation and the extemporization of the service, this was, without any doubt, the prelude of modern conference interpreting:

*Tout est prêt, désormais, pour l’entrée en
scène de l’interprète. [...] C’est à cette
conférence, prélude de la Société des Nations,
que l’interprétation de congrès fait ses premiers
pas.*

(Van Hoof, 1962 :19)

Based on this precedent, English and French became the official languages of the bodies created in Versailles: the Society of Nations, the International Permanent Court of

⁷⁷ Baigorri, 2000: 15.

⁷⁸ To this respect, it is worth mentioning a curious anecdote. In the database of the Society of Nations, in Geneva, under the inscription *Languages*, there are dozens of files regarding the different proposals as solutions to the problem of multilingualism. Among them, there are suggestions to go back to Latin as common language; to adopt simply a ‘basic’ English, or even to use artificial languages such as Volapük (created around 1880) or Esperanto (1887).

Justice and the International Labor Organization. They began also to be commonly used in international non-governmental organizations, as well as in preparatory congresses of international conventions on railway/airway transportation and radio communication.

The new professional figure of the conference interpreter, would be, from this moment on, an indispensable piece in the mechanism of this type of fora, even though, training and labor conditions were yet to be defined.

The ‘bilingualism’ English/French continued to exist throughout the 20s and the 30s, but right after the Second World War the new geopolitical balance made possible that the success achieved by English until that moment turned to be a bridgehead of an long-lasting predominance, whose influence on the world stage deepens still nowadays.

At the same time, new language made their way on the diplomatic arena, for instance Russian, Chinese, Spanish, and more recently Arabic⁷⁹. The need to include such languages in the international discussions became more and more pressing. The fact that a language was to be considered official within an international organization was definitely a relevant factor for its

⁷⁹ UN's official languages are six, namely: English, French, Spanish, Russian, Chinese and Arabic. Russian and Chinese became UN official languages right away in 1944, when the four nations United States, United Kingdom, Soviet Union and China met in Washington to draft the first charter of the new organization. But in spite of the rule laid down in the Charter, English and French were still the only two working languages and Chinese and Russian were not used. The question of Spanish then, arose in the Committee which drafted the Constitution of the World Health Organization. The many Spanish-speaking delegations insisted on having their language used in exactly the same conditions as French or English. Very slowly, but surely, interpretation gained ground in Spanish, Chinese and Russian as well. Arabic was the last language to be chosen as official, mainly due to the pressing of Arab-speaking nations and the diffusion of the language in many areas of the world (See: Herbert, 1978: 7-8).

promotion and use, independently from its merits as a tool for international communication.

As we can see, the interpreter role is inextricably linked to any international geo-political change, which has direct consequences on the preponderance of a specific language on the others.

With the development of societies and relations among them, also the interpreter profession – and in our case, the military interpreter – makes progress and shapes itself according to economic and geo-political circumstances, technical developments, balance of powers, interdependence among states, globalization.

Chapter III will be entirely dedicated to the shaping up of the military interpreter career and its engagement since World War I on.

Chapter III

THE BIRTH OF A PROFESSION: WORLD WAR I & II

3.1 THE WAR AS SCHOOL FOR INTERPRETERS

The Peace Conference concluding World War I (1919), which sanctioned the real birth of conference diplomatic interpreting, was not a spontaneous phenomenon, but rather the result of an intersection of inter-ally relations existing during the First World War.

*“[...] Dans quelle arme
faut-il ranger le Corps
des Interprètes ? [...]
Fantassins, Cavaliers,
Armes Savantes ?
Certainement des
encyclopédies vivantes,
des « bons à tout
faire » !”*

M. de Hasque

During this period in fact, the close contacts and cooperation among French, British and later American armies required the presence of soldiers able to speak the two languages of the alliance (French and English) plus German. The knowledge of foreign languages became an underlying strategic resource used by the different Ministries of War and the General Staffs to meet the need of the intelligence services – espionage and counterespionage – as well as those regarding the interrogation of prisoners⁸⁰.

⁸⁰ As seen in Chapter I, 1.6.

The war was, to a certain extent, a forced school of languages. As a matter of fact, international conflicts involving multinational coalitions always require multilingual communication. Languages are strategic arms in the fulfillment of various objectives and interpreters are an important tool in the logistics of war.

The measures initially taken to fill the linguistic gap between the different armies were improvised and unstructured; bilinguals, or young soldiers familiar with foreign languages, offered their skills to inform their respective Staffs, to translate intercepted documents or to mediate between the parties. They knew the language, but they were not acquainted with anything about interpretation/translation techniques⁸¹.

However, with the protraction of the conflict, these services were perfected to the point that some of these soldiers would work, after a few years, as official interpreters in the very Peace Conference. Among these bright servicemen, it is worth mentioning a couple of them, such as Paul Mantoux – leading interpreter during the negotiations of the Peace Conference – Jean Herbert, one of the fathers of modern interpretation, and Stephen Bonsal, diplomat, journalist, and writer⁸². Others, who worked during the war in the ministries of war and propaganda, in inter-ally committees and reparation commissions, brought into being the market of free-lance interpreters⁸³.

The First World War, on the one hand, generated an urgent, heavy-volume demand for people able to understand and speak

⁸¹ Baigorri, 2000: 25.

⁸² Van Hoof, 1962: 20.

⁸³ Bagorri, 2000: 86.

chiefly English, French and German, which largely exceeded the availability of national diplomatic services. On the other, in the battlefield, it forced young people coming from different countries to live in close contact with each other – in makeshift barracks, trenches, prisons, hospitals – where the opportunities to learn, to teach and to improve one’s skills were numerous.

The profession of ‘military interpreter’ began for the majority of these soldiers by chance, as nothing was planned ahead or experienced before. As described in greater detail in the following chapter, in some cases, this special engagement in the military had an occasional status which lasted only for the period of war and simply disappeared afterwards. In other cases instead, this service developed further and enhanced its structure giving life to a real *Corps of Military Interpreters* existing also in peacetime. This body of interpreters was controlled by strict regulations and codes of conduct under which its highly selected personnel carried out the most various tasks. This is the case of countries like France, Germany or Denmark.

3.2 THE ‘CORPS OF MILITARY INTEPRETERS’: THE BELGIAN CASE

When we use the word *Corps*, we generally refer to an organized subdivision of the military establishment, or more

generally, to a body of people acting together under a common direction or having a common activity.

We have the Marine Corps, the Army Medical Corps, as well as the Ballet Corps or the Diplomatic Corps, to mention a few. We all understand immediately their role, their function; we have clearly in our minds their field of action and even their clothing.

Yet, it is rather awkward then, to talk about a *Corps of Military Interpreters*. Most of the people do not have any point of reference to place it correctly, both geographically and historically. Many even ignore completely its existence. But, as indicated below, this body did exist for several decades and in some countries it still does.

During World War I, the nations involved in the international conflict made the best they could to tackle the communication problem generated by the war. Not only in connection with the need of dialogue within the European-American alliance and between the allies and the enemy, but also considering the contacts that the military had to maintain with the local population and the consequences of the movements of refugees and exiles. The situation was delicate and the necessity of providing the armies with linguistically-trained military personnel was felt from one side of the battlefield to the opposite one.

The *Corps of Military Interpreters* was officially founded and recognized only in a limited number of states, namely Belgium, France, Germany, Denmark, and the Netherlands⁸⁴. Among

⁸⁴ The countries taken into consideration for this analysis are the founding nations of NATO, plus Germany.

them, we definitely have to give credit to the Belgian Army as a pioneer⁸⁵ in the creation of this service which dates back to 1914, in the saber rattling of the First World War.

What was exactly this Corps, and how did it function?

It is not easy to give a satisfactory answer to this question, because of the lack of literature on the topic. Nobody seemed to care about recording for the generations to come the rights, obligations, tasks, pre-requisites, and vicissitudes of these men. Nobody but the Belgians who, once again, seem to be the most sensitive and dedicated people in relation to this aspect of their military establishment.

Thanks to the few handbooks edited by the Belgian Army during the First and the Second World Wars⁸⁶, it is possible to have – if not a complete – at least a partial but clear picture of the history of this Corps and a thorough description of its members.

Great consideration and great merit is given to the Belgian interpreters in such books. Pages and pages are spent in praising their courage, in commending their value or in describing their deeds. For their cultural background and their knowledge – many of them had been lawyers, bankers,

⁸⁵ As seen in Chapter II, section 2.3, France was the first western nation to seriously organize the first schools for diplomatic interpreters (dragomans) on the wake of the Turkish model in the 16th and 17th centuries. To this respect it is correct and proper to say that France already trained military interpreters and had a professional Corps of Military Interpreters in the mid of the 17th century, during its campaign in Africa. Yet any information on this subject is incomplete and classified for the general public. This is the reason why I decided to take Belgium as a case in point for all. France and Germany will be analyzed in Chapter V together with all the other NATO founding countries.

⁸⁶ Armée Belge (1917). *Aide-Mémoire de l'Interprète belge*. Paris: Imprimerie Militaire, Berger - Levrault. Author unknown (1919). *Les Interprètes belges dans l'Armée britannique (1915-1918)*. Bruxelles: Duchenne. Author unknown (1952). *Livre d'or de la mission militaire belge du service de liaison militaire belge et du Corps des interprètes 1944-1946*. (s.l.). De Hasque, M. (1935). *Les grandes lignes de l'histoire de Corps des interprètes militaires belges 1914-1918*. Anvers: J. Lamoën.

businessmen, insurance brokers – they were given a high profile in the army and were decorated with medals for valor.

We will take as an example the Belgian experience, since the poor documentation regarding other countries is fragmented and in most cases inconsistent.

First of all, it is necessary to distinguish the Corps of Interpreters of the First World War from that of the Second. The former was definitely more improvised and carried out without much practice, the time was little to organize every single detail before making it operative, but the need of such a service was pressing. On the basis of this first experience, the latter was able to structure itself more efficiently, setting up contests for the many candidates and providing the suitable ones with specific quick courses.

3.2.1 History (part I)

With the invasion of the neutral Belgium by the German troops in 1914 – in order to take from behind the French army aligned on the border with Germany – England entered the war to defend Belgium. But when the British army moored to the Belgian land, it faced the problem of not knowing the Belgian institutions and laws, and both the national languages.

To overcome the cultural/linguistic obstacle, some British commanders recruited on the spot a few polyglot military people willing to accompany them.

When the first battle of Ypres cooled down (October/November 1914), Colonel T. Bridge – Chief of the

British mission in Belgium – on behalf of the British government, charged the Belgium Minister of War with the creation of a regularly organized Corps of Military Interpreters. The Baron de Broqueville – the Belgium Minister of War – agreed immediately and entrusted Colonel De Grunne – Count of Hemricourt and Senior Territorial Commander of Havre – with recruiting, assigning to a unit, and addressing to the Ypres front the 160 war volunteers, who for the three following years would form this small special corps as an addition to the 12th British army.

The Belgian Corps of Military Interpreters was created on November 30, 1914⁸⁷ with the following letter by Broqueville to De Grunne:

« Dunkerque, le 30 novembre 1914

« MONSIEUR LE COLONEL,

« J'ai l'honneur de vous transmettre la copie de la correspondance échangée avec le G. Q. G⁸⁸. et avec le chef de la Mission anglaise pour régler la question des interprètes.

« Je vous charge d'être l'intermédiaire entre l'autorité belge et le colonel commandant la base anglaise pour assurer la mise sur pied de ce service nouveau.

« Les candidates que je désignerai devront se présenter devant vous avant d'être adressés à l'autorité anglaise.

« Vous examinerez les titres des civils qui se présenteront à vous ; vous tiendrez note de leur candidature et vous soumettrez les propositions qui vous paraîtront les meilleures.

« Je commissionnerai en qualité de lieutenant et sous-lieutenant des sujets particulièrement aptes; les autres recevront le grade de sergent.

⁸⁷ Even though it was officially recognized by King Albert of Belgium only in November 1917, through a Royal Decree.

⁸⁸ G.H.Q, War General Headquarters.

« La mission des interprètes est particulièrement délicate; il est nécessaire de ne recevoir dans ce service que des sujets offrant toutes garanties.

« Vous leur expliquerez qu'ils sont placés, au point de vue disciplinaire, sous les ordres du chef de la Mission belge au G. Q. G. anglais et vous leur remettrez un exemplaire de notre règlement sur les prestations militaires, qui fixe les droits et les devoirs des troupes cantonnant en Belgique.

*« Le Ministre de la Guerre,
« S. BROQUEVILLE. »⁸⁹*

As we can evince from this letter, despite the agitated times and the delicate mission, the Corps was organized with seriousness and professionalism.

According to Maurice De Hasque (1935: 7-8) – Belgian Honorary Chief Interpreter – it was a hard task to pigeonhole this Corps within the army. It differed from any other well defined entity constituting an infantry, cavalry, engineering, or artillery regiment. These men were the mixture of all these corps; they rode horses egregiously, they were given a full military equipment, they were engineers or lawyers. They did not belong to any of the mentioned corps for their particular activity, but at the same time they belonged to all, “et voilà que, par une ironie du sort” (De Hasque, 1935:7) these interpreters were eventually assigned to the Artillery Regiment, which has been the guardian of its archives.

3.2.2 History (part II)

⁸⁹ Original letter. Author unknown, in *Les Interprètes Belges dans l'Armée Britannique*, 1919: 1-2.

In the night between the 23rd and the 24th of January of 1915, the first two detachments of this Corps took the train from the maritime station of Havre to the Ypres front, where the British troops – decimated and exhausted after the first battle – had been substituted by the French divisions.

To make up for the lack of effectives, some interpreters were charged with the recruitment, the organization and the direction of civil worker teams engaged in the new defensive lines. Every night, these teams – led by the British engineers and the interpreters – worked between the frontline and the British batteries. Many were the wounded and the dead due to the shell and the howitzer grenades.

During the last week of March, the third detachment of interpreters plus two new British divisions arrived at Ypres, followed by the first Canadian division at the beginning of April.

The second battle of Ypres started the night of April 17, 1915 and lasted until the end of May. It was right during this fighting that the Corps of Interpreters registered its first human losses.

The arrival of new reinforcements required the presence of supplementary detachments and that of many interpreters from outside the division. The organization of the British sector in control-zones and the appointment of field commanders required the creation of fixed posts of interpreters. During the relatively calm period between the end of the second battle and the summer of 1917, the regular number of interpreters within the 2nd British Army was between 150 and 200.

The spring 1917 though, brought about the first worries of a new great attack on the Ypres front. Reinforcements of sappers and workers were engaged to build new railways, airports, wood barracks, ammunition depots and to fix the numerous loading/unloading ramps for troops, artillery, horses, ammunition, tanks and food supplies.

At the Havre base, General de Grunne was ordered by the British General Headquarters (G.H.Q.) to recruit immediately 400 new interpreters. Unfortunately, direct enlistments and auxiliary services, that until that moment had provided interpreter candidates, were unable to satisfy such a demand. Hence, the decision was that of turning to the soldiers of the Belgian field army and the refugees who could master English. Many raw young men flocked from any corps and regiment. They would eventually form the new detachments of interpreters commanded by some thirty senior and worthy sergeant colleagues who, in that occasion, were promoted to lieutenants.

The third battle of Ypres was the most terrifying and bloody one. The Belgian interpreters were tested severely in courage, stamina, professionalism, paying a high price in human lives.

In the middle of these tragic events, at the beginning of November 1917, a royal decree officially created the *Belgian Corps of Military Interpreters*. Deed ignored by most of the concerned people⁹⁰.

It is clear that the situation lived by the first Belgian interpreters was very delicate; engaged on the frontline of

⁹⁰ De Hasque, 1935: 18.

battles⁹¹ that registered a heavy death toll even in their ranks, these people ignored both the British military life and military organization – completely different from the Belgian one – and had to adapt themselves to the double task of giving the best service possible to the British army, on the one hand, and safeguarding cautiously the local population from all sort of abuses linked to the long military occupation, on the other.

However, from the memories of *Les Interprètes Belges dans l'Armée Britannique* (1919: 2-3) we can apprehend that the interpreters were received with great enthusiasm and satisfaction by the local population, more than glad to finally have Belgian mediators between them and the English and French authorities. They were also truly appreciated by the military becoming immediately their trusted men.

In spite of the harsh conditions, these first men set their teeth into their job and gave life to a real tradition:

Il est évident que la situation des premiers interprètes fut très délicate, sans la moindre connaissance de la vie militaire ou de l'organisation militaire britannique, si différentes des nôtres. Ils durent en faire l'expérience première, créer une tradition. Je crois pouvoir affirmer qu'ils ne s'en sont pas trop mal acquittés.

(De Hasque, 1935: 12)

⁹¹ The three battles of Ypres (1914-1915, April 1917 and September 1917 respectively) cost the lives of 250,000 British soldiers, 105,000 of whom were never identified. Hundreds were the losses among the interpreters.

The arrival of two American divisions, at the end of summer 1918, helped foresee the end of the third and last battle. With the piecemeal dissolution of the enemy concentrations, King Albert I ordered the disbandment of the British armies.

The first *Belgian Corps of Military Interpreters* ceased to exist on September 25, 1919, to be reorganized in 1944 during World War II.

The commendation and the tribute paid by the Belgian Army to this linguistic unit was so profound and sincere that an unknown writer published on October 9, 1919 in the newspaper *Neptune* of Anvers the obituary notice of the Belgian Corps of Military Interpreter. De Hasque included the original article in his booklet *Les Grandes Lignes de l'Histoire du Corps des Interprètes Militaires Belges*:

« Le 25 septembre dernier, mortellement frappé par un arrêté royal, les Corps des Interprètes s'est éteint sans bruit, comme il était né sans tapage, le 2 novembre 1917, des œuvres de dame Nécessité et d'un autre arrêté royal.

Au fait, il y eut des interprètes depuis qu'il y eut des troupes alliées sur le sol belge. Ce fut au début une sorte de formation d'élite où seuls pénétraient, à la faveur de bonnes et chaudes recommandations, les fortunés jouvenceaux capables de mener bon train avec une solde minime et des ressources personnelles. Plus tard, nécessité aidant, on accueillit des bourgeois, et enfin au moment de la grande

offensive, tout fantassin, artilleur ou cavalier connaissant l'anglais, était admis.

Il eut des pères avarés, le pauvre corps des interprètes. Il eut même en la personne de « grûne pier » une belle-mère prolongée. Il eut surtout ses héros. Le métier d'interprète avait ses dangers et pas mal de ses membres surent s'y distinguer.

Pourquoi l'a-t-on complètement supprimé puisqu'il a démontré son utilité en compagnie? Il eut été plus raisonnable d'en garder la charpente, l'Etat-Major, et de faire passer aux hommes qui pourraient éventuellement en faire partie, un examen d'admission, les laissant dans leur unité d'origine, jusqu'à ce qu'on en eût besoin. Cela se fit en 1917.

Les interprètes, tant officiers que sous-officiers, ont bien mérité de la Patrie. Leur besogne ne les appelait pas constamment en première ligne, mais la mission qu'il avaient à remplir était souvent délicate et méritante.

Ils étaient en quelque sorte des consuls attachés aux divisions alliées, chargés de défendre les intérêts des populations belges tout en sauvegardant ceux de nos alliés, ce qui n'était pas toujours aisé.

L'arrêté supprimant le corps aurait pu contenir quelques mots d'éloges pour ceux qui en firent partie et surtout pour ceux qui sont tombés en remplissant glorieusement les missions de haute confiance qu'on leur donnait parfois. Leur mérite est d'autant plus remarquable que la plupart d'entre eux étaient inaptes au service armé ».

(De Hasque, 1935: 23-24)

3.2.3 Recruitment and engagement

Once the *Corps of Military Interpreters* was created, the recruitment of personnel took place on direct voluntary enlistment or through auxiliary services. In the chaos and disorganization of the beginning, the interpreters were selected on the basis of linguistic knowledge primarily – French, Flemish, English and German – and military experience. They were mainly war volunteers belonging to the Field Army, dismissed or rejected due to wounds or temporary physical disabilities. There were as well officers of the Civil Guard and English or Dutch refugees, most of whom were married with children.

Among them, the Corps included businessmen, insurance brokers, importers, bankers, stockbrokers, lawyers, land owners, ship-owners, manufacturers. People who, previously, had had business contacts with London, Montreal, Calcutta,

Melbourne or Cape Town and had a solid experience in foreign affairs as well as a consistent cultural background⁹².

The instructions they received were of putting themselves at the disposal of the British military authorities on the Ypres front, meeting their cultural/linguistic needs, and protecting the local population from the abuses generated by the protraction of the conflict⁹³.

Even while they were among the British troops, they held the representation of their country and its army. Hence, they had the obligation to know thoroughly the Belgian laws and the military orders they had to fulfill. They were obliged to comply with all the Belgian, English as well as French regulations dealing with the quartering and the requisitions in Belgium and France⁹⁴.

The Belgian Staff disseminated the effectives of this small unit of 150-200 interpreter-officers in the Infantry, Cavalry, Artillery and Engineers, organizing the armed division of around 18.000 men in the following way:

General Staff:		1 interpreter-officer
Claim Commission		
Assistant Provost-Marshal	→	1 non-commissioned interpreter
Sector Police		every 4 Battalions

⁹² Author unknown, 1919: 7, in *Les Interprètes belges dans l'Armée britannique (1915-1918)*.

⁹³ Armée Belge, 1917 : 11-12, in *Aide-Mémoire de l'Interprète belge*.

⁹⁴ Author unknown, 1919: 7, in *Les Interprètes belges dans l'Armée Britannique (1915-1918)*.

These men could not be considered officially employees dedicated to the translation of documents. Their role – definitely more dynamic, active and interesting⁹⁶ – could be compared to that of liaison officers representing each combat unit.

Appendix 2 shows the sectorial organization of the allied Forces on Belgian territory and the links the interpreters had to ensure⁹⁷.

Manifold were the tasks of the interpreters within the single Divisions, Battalions, and Brigades. Moving around on foot, or riding a horse or a bike, they did not only have the duty to organize their unit's quartering, supervise the effective retribution of the soldiers, control the entire sector they were assigned to, but they also had to create harmony within the Anglo-French Flemish cocktail, between the occupying troops and the local population. This task was not at all easy because of the generally shared stereotype which depicted the Belgians as Germanophiles.

The interpreters had their own distinguishing uniform. They wore a khaki outfit and a helmet with its khaki helmet-cover. On the right arm, they wore a three-color armband with the national Golden or Silver Lion – symbol of Belgium –, on the left arm, the formation badge: a yellow flame on a black shield with red border⁹⁸. The flame was the symbol of the descent of the Holy Ghost on the apostles that resulted in the gift of speech for all of them. This is the reason why the flame was

⁹⁶ *Les Interprètes Belges dans l'Armée Britannique*, 1919: 4.

⁹⁷ Original scheme from *Aide-Mémoire de l'Interprète Belge* (1917).

⁹⁸ Appendix 3.

chosen as the symbol of the interpreters. Two were the versions of this flame, the embroidered and the woven⁹⁹.

The interpreters were also provided with an identification badge, an identity card, arms and ammunitions, and two gas-proof masks.

3.2.4 History (part III)

Unfortunately, there is no literature on the destiny and the careers of this first group of Belgian interpreters once World War I was over, since the first *Corps of Military Interpreters* had been dissolved.

The archives of such a Corps reappeared only after World War II, with the creation of the second and last *Corps of Military Interpreters*.

Despite Belgium's territorial inviolability – signed in the Locarno Treaties of 1925 by Britain, France, Germany and Italy – the small state was attacked for the second time by the German troops in 1940. Once again, France and Britain offered their assistance sending their divisions.

It is only in November 1944 though, that the second *Belgian Corps of Military Interpreters* was officially created by order of the Belgian Ministry of Defense. The new interpreters would work for the units and services of the 21st British Army Corps and for the 12th US Army Corps.

⁹⁹ *Aide-Mémoire de l'Interprète Belge*, 1917: 14 and

[Hhttp://www.belgianbadges4046.be/Interpr.htm](http://www.belgianbadges4046.be/Interpr.htm)H (consulted in October 2004). Appendix 4.

Lieutenant-Colonel of Cavalry, A. de Selliers de Moranville, assigned to the Staff of the Belgian Military Mission, was charged with the organization and the recruitment of this Corps¹⁰⁰.

More than 3000 were the candidates. They were selected severely, both on a physical-moral basis, and on the mastery of English and German. The suitable ones, divided in groups of thirty, had to attend a 10-day quick course in the military headquarters of Panquin de Tervueren, under the direction of Officers and Non-commissioned Officers (NCO) of the 21st Army Group Interpreter School. Subsequently, they were assigned to the different British units. Most of them received the rank of NCO, only 50 that of subaltern officer. The corps reached a maximum peak of 400 interpreters. The first interpreters began their service in January of 1945, while the *Corps* was disbanded definitely on May 8, 1946¹⁰¹.

The original files reporting the creation and dissolution of the *Corps* as presented in the *Livre d'Or de la Mission Militaire Belge du Service de Liaison Militaire Belge et du Corps des Interprètes* (1952) are reproduced in Appendix 5.

3.2.5 Acknowledgments

The Belgian army likes to remember its brave interpreters with all the honors and the credit they deserved. The related

¹⁰⁰ Author unknown, 1952: 1-2, in *Livre d'or de la mission militaire belge du service de liaison militaire belge et du Corps des interprètes 1944-1946*.

¹⁰¹ Author unknown, 1952: 1-2, in *Livre d'or de la mission militaire belge du service de liaison militaire belge et du Corps des interprètes 1944-1946*.

adjectives most commonly used in the archive of this Corps were: courageous, indefatigable, incomparable, heroic, excellent, generous, appreciated, intelligent, precious, tactful, praiseworthy, admirably patient, with noble righteousness, with splendid behavior, etc.

According to the literature on the subject¹⁰², the Belgian Military Interpreters were able to give birth to a frank cordiality among the occupying troops and the local population gaining the full trust of both parties.

Their duty was done egregiously, their popularity exceeded any expectation and their abnegation was recognized and commended conspicuously, as the following agenda of February 11, 1917 demonstrates:

Agenda:

BELGIAN MISSION

assigned to the G.H.Q.
British Army
No. 6927 OM.

« J'ai l'honneur de porter à la connaissance de Messieurs les Officiers et Sous-Officiers interprètes que j'ai été désigné par S.M. le Roi pour prendre le commandement de la Mission Militaire à Londres.

« Au moment de partir, je tiens à les remercier tous du zèle et du dévouement dont ils ont fait preuve en toutes circonstances et à leur dire combien j'ai hautement apprécié l'intelligence et tact avec lesquels ils se sont acquittés de missions souvent difficiles.

« Je n'oublierai pas le précieux concours qu'ils m'ont apporté.

*« Au G.Q.G. Britannique, le 11 février 1917.
« Le Général Major. A.D.C. du Roi,*

¹⁰² Ibidem note 7.

« *Chef de la Mission,*
(Signed) « *Comte de Jonghe d'Ardoye* »¹⁰³

The French and Belgian newspapers of the time did not fail to pay tribute to these interpreters.

From the *Echo de Paris* dated October 16, 1918:

*« Les troupes britanniques, en liaison avec les Belges avaient franchi 6 kilomètres en moins d'une heure. La liaison avait été parfaite, les Interprètes belges ayant fait preuve d'une grande bravoure. »*¹⁰⁴

The *Nation Belge*, dated October 16, 1918 wrote :

*« La liaison entre les Belges, le 9e de ligne, et les Britanniques restait parfaite malgré une différence de vitesse de barrage. Les interprètes belges, au nombre d'une vingtaine, avec un mépris absolu du danger, assurèrent la soudure anglo-belge. Ils se distinguèrent tous. [...] »*¹⁰⁵

From the *Nation Belge* dated October 26, 1918:

*« Le Corps des Interprètes a montré dans les batailles récentes qu'il se rit du danger. Il y a là pour lui une tâche d'une importance capitale, pourvu qu'il soit suffisamment nombreux et qu'il agisse vite. »*¹⁰⁶

A eulogy by General Pereira – Commander of the 1st Guard Brigade – in the agenda of June 28, 1917, to the merit of Léon Gyssels, liaison interpreter between the British and the French

¹⁰³ *Les Interprètes Belges dans l'Armée Britannique*, 1919: 8.

¹⁰⁴ De Hasque, 1935: 21.

¹⁰⁵ De Hasque, 1935: 21-22.

²⁷ De Hasque, 1935: 22.

troops in Boesinghe, and later between the Belgians and the British army one step from the enemy, is a further testimony of the great consideration enjoyed by these men:

BELGIAN MISSION
Assigned to G.H.Q.

British Army

« Au G.Q.G. de l'Armée Britannique,
le 28 juin 1917

« J'ai l'honneur et la satisfaction de porter à la connaissance de MM. Des Officiers et du personnel de la Mission la traduction du rapport fait par le général commandant la 123^e brigade britannique au sujet de la belle conduite du 1^{er} maréchal des logis interprète Gyssels Léon.

J'adresse mes plus vives félicitations à ce militaire.

Rapport :

« Le susdit interprète, attaché au G.Q. de la 123^e brigade d'infanterie ayant des connaissances de la langue allemande, s'offrit, avant les opérations, à s'employer auprès des prisonniers allemands.

« Les 7 et 8 juin, il se rendit très utile en organisant des détachements de prisonniers pour aider à transporter nos blessés. Le 7 juin, apprenant que le sous-lieutenant Pounds, 23rd Middlesex Regiment, était tombé entre l'ancienne première ligne britannique et l'ancienne première ligne allemande, il s'y rendit avec une civière, assisté par l'ordonnance de l'officier précité; à l'extrémité de Shelley Lane, il tenta de traverser le terrain restant à franchir bien que celui-ci se trouvât sous un violent tir de barrage allemand; projeté à terre par un obus brisant, il continua néanmoins à s'avancer et trouva que l'officier avait été déjà ramené dans les lignes.

« Bien que fortement ébranlé par la commotion, il poursuivit ses occupations auprès des prisonniers, jusqu'à ce qu'il fût blessé à la jambe par un shrapnell. Il

resta néanmoins en service jusqu'au soir du 8 juin où il fut évacué vers l'arrière.

« Il s'est comporté sans cesse de la manière la plus courageuse et a toujours prêté volontairement une aide précieuse.

(Signed) « C. W. E. Gordon »¹⁰⁷

The archives of the Corps contain also the list¹⁰⁸ in alphabetical order of all the Belgian interpreters – officers and NCOs – assigned to the British Army during the 1915, 1916, 1917 campaigns and belonging to the *Corps of Military Interpreters*. They include as well a list¹⁰⁹ of the interpreters who, during the 1915-16-17-18 campaigns, were decorated with one or more of the following medals: *Military Cross, Croix de guerre française/belge, Croix de Chevalier de l'Orde de la Couronne, Croix de Chevalier de l'Orde de Léopold II, Croix de St. George, Décoration militaire, Distinguished Conduct Medal*. A third list¹¹⁰ is dedicated to the eulogy of the interpreters who distinguished themselves the most by their devotion to duty among the British troops. An honorific citation corresponds to each name of the list.

3.3 VADEMECUM OF THE MILITARY INTERPRETER

¹⁰⁷ *Les Interprètes Belges dans l'Armée Britannique*, 1919: 10.

¹⁰⁸ Appendix 6, *Les Interprètes Belges dans l'Armée Britannique* 1919: 23-24.

¹⁰⁹ Appendix 7, *Les Interprètes Belges dans l'Armée Britannique* 1919: 14-16.

¹¹⁰ Appendix 8, *Les Interprètes Belges dans l'Armée Britannique* 1919: 17-20.

It would not be correct and possible to generalize and draw up common lines regarding the training and the role of military interpreters in all nations involved in World War I and II¹¹¹, simply because, on the one hand, there is a great scarcity of information at the national level, on the other, because each country has its own history and faced the linguistic/cultural problem in a different way.

Having said that, it is still presumable that some standards and characteristics about the engagement of military interpreters in such delicate periods applied to more than one state.

General obligations, rights, functions, discipline, recommendations, secrecy, tasks, quartering, and population assistance are just few of the many areas covered by the handbook *Aide-Mémoire de l'Interprète Belge* (1917) edited by the Belgian Army during the First World War. This book is a sort of Bible for the *Belgian Corps of Military Interpreters* that can be considered today extremely useful to examine thoroughly this unrecorded profession.

Once again we take as an example the Belgian experience. What follows (from section 3.3.1 through 3.3.7) is a summarized and personally readapted version of the vademecum of the Belgian military interpreter as presented in the book mentioned above.

3.3.1 Interpreter's role – general obligations

¹¹¹ This will be analyzed in Chapter V.

The interpreter assigned to the British Army must carry out primarily two tasks:

1. Act as a mediator between the British military authorities on the one hand, and the civil authorities and Belgian population on the other.
2. More generally, help British military authorities to meet their translation and interpretation needs.

In order to satisfy these demands and to guarantee good relations between the parties involved, the interpreter must demonstrate to have qualities such as: correct behavior, kindness, tact, affability, heartiness, patience, respect and deference. His job is based on interpersonal relations; the local population may not understand certain military needs, and the British troops may ignore completely Belgian laws, customs and habits. Often, the practical solution to problems that can arise between allies depend on the sensitivity and the tact of the interpreter.

During a war of movement, the interpreter may be called to do his duty on the frontline. Those who are entitled with this honor, will have to set a clear paragon of military virtue, of patience, strength, courage, resourcefulness, being worthy of the reputation of a Belgian soldier. The real courage lies in the fulfillment of his mission – even if risky – as interpreter, with coolness and self-possession, without hesitations and considering every possible precaution.

The interpreter suspected of mere sufficient preparation, careless behavior, incompetence or feebleness is emarginated and scorned by the British officers as a useless and damaging

frill. On the contrary, the interpreter who embodies the qualities mentioned above, merits the trust, the esteem, the sympathy of the British officers because he carries out a delicate task serving his country as well as enhancing the climate of friendship among allies.

The interpreter represents always and only the Belgian army. He will therefore have to know thoroughly the Belgian laws and the military regulations. He can never act against the Belgian laws. In case of doubt or ignorance, he will immediately report to his officer asking for elucidations.

The interpreter can never arrogate himself civil or police powers.

The interpreter is prohibited to leave the quartering area of the army or division he is assigned to without a previous authorization by a liaison officer.

3.3.2 Discipline

As to the contacts with the British officers, the interpreter must be disciplined at all times, showing the same kind of deference saved for his Belgian superiors.

The benevolence he will receive from the allies must not erode his respectful behavior; any form of familiarity or informality must be considered lack of tact.

As to the British soldiers – same rank or lower – he must show a spirit of solidarity maintaining dignity and prestige. In the conversations with his comrades or with the civilians, he will

be discreet avoiding appraisals of his superiors, Belgian and British officers.

He is severely prohibited to perform commercial activities, and to accept presents or tips for the service offered to civilians.

3.3.3 Recommendations

The interpreter is prohibited to receive any form of recommendation by an higher authority aiming at making a career or getting a reward.

The interpreter is also severely prohibited to ask the British officers for certificates of merit for his service, as well as to solicit his superiors for a quality of duty reward.

3.3.4 Private correspondence (obligations)

As to the forwarding of personal letters or packages, the interpreter must respect thoroughly the norms set by the British authority.

It is severely prohibited to send military information, and particularly regarding:

- unit of belonging;
- place of origin, quartering;
- shifts in quartering;
- rest quartering;
- duration of the service in the trench / of the rest;
- placing of batteries, observers, machineguns;
- position of telegraph and telephone lines;

- placing and details of the defensive machinery;
- consequences of enemy bombings;
- done or planned movements;
- criticism toward the work or behavior of superiors (also allies);
- the frontline units;
- placing of units and General Staff;
- success or failure of the attacks;
- suffered losses;
- information regarding artillery, ammunitions, materials used;
- conditions of materials;
- organization of the army, number of effectives;
- service in the units and within the Corps;
- beginning and end of leaves;
- movement of troops;
- dates of military operations;
- soldiers' morale.

The correspondence revealing malevolence, ambiguity, conventional language, Morse code, stenography, containing handkerchiefs, flags, tents, etc. will be blocked. So will be all the letters inviting people not to enlist and written in languages other than French, Flemish, English or German.

It is prohibited to send letters to citizens of enemy countries, with the exception of refugees. The correspondence to the latter must be deposited unsealed.

3.3.5 The interpreter at the 'court-martial'

The military authority may require the interpreter services in military preliminary investigations in which civilians are called to testify.

Both during preliminary investigations and hearings at the court-martial, the interpreter must limit himself to translate verbatim questions and answers without commenting them or talking with the witnesses. He will make the witnesses swear an oath according to the Belgian practices.

3.3.6 Population assistance

The interpreter must do everything possible to verify whether the population is aware of the provisions in case of enemy attacks. He will have to give all the information necessary making sure all inhabitants have functioning gas-proof masks and know how to use them.

In case of serious or devastating events, such as: fires, contentions with the population, robberies, disputes, tragedies, etc. the interpreter will have to report to the officer of his detachment. In the emergency cases, he will use telegraph or telephone.

In case of incidents to civilians imputable to the British troops, the interpreter will have to draw up a report including the essential data of the civilian and the declarations of both British military and civilian witnesses.

As to claims lodged by the population, the interpreter will have to notify the mayor of the address of his detachment, where the claims could be sent to. A timetable will be set for claims.

The interpreter is not liable for intervening in the possible discussions. His role is limited to inform the British officer about the damage amount, a role that requires tact and competence for the fair resolution of the controversy in a short time.

In case of scarcity of medical personnel or in case of emergency, the interpreter will inform a British doctor about the situation of sick people or wounded ones needing assistance.

In case of hospital evacuation, the interpreter will have to report immediately to his interpreter-officer.

The wounded people affected by infective diseases will be reported to the Belgian service, which will do everything possible to make sure they will be visited by a Belgian doctor in charge.

The interpreter must know the provisions regulating the civilian movements, in order to be able to teach them to the population in case of ignorance. Mainly they are:

- Residence permit (movement in the residence area);
- Safe-conduct (movement in Belgium, out of the residence area);
- Movement permit to get out of Belgium;
- Permit to enter areas occupied by British troops (for residents abroad);

- Movement permit for cars, motorbikes and bicycles issued by the British military authority.

When the Belgian or the allied troops reconquer the invaded areas and during the following period, the population will have urgent needs, primarily due to the interruption of communication and the lack of food supply.

The first task of the interpreter arriving in a reoccupied zone will be that of getting to know the number of inhabitants and inform subsequently his interpreter-officers. In order to do so, he will make use of cyclists, bikers and car drivers, since telephone and telegraph lines will not yet be restored. Once the information is acknowledged, the dispatch of food will be organized.

Food supplies will be distributed among the civilians according to the directives of the Belgian army and on the basis of the local needs evaluated previously by the interpreter.

As to the local hygiene and sanitation, the interpreter will have to report regularly to the mission chief about the situation of the reoccupied areas, giving information regarding the already adopted measures as well as those yet to be adopted. Special attention must be paid to burials.

The interpreter will also make sure that well water and springs water are not drunk by the population before a chemical analysis is carried out to exclude the presence of possible poisons.

The interpreter is not bound to intervene in matters of population evacuation; this task is managed by the British military authority together with the mission chief.

3.3.7 Salary and Leave

The interpreters (1st sergeant and 1st logistic marshal) are entitled to:

- Ordinary salary of their rank;
- Supplement of NCO salary;
- Special daily bonus.

Those with merits of seniority, merits of the front or decorated with military medals will be entitled to a higher salary.

The interpreter is entitled of a week of leave every 120 day. The duration of the leave is normally of 7 days starting from the day of arrival at the place of destination where the interpreter will spend his leave. The total duration of the leave, including travel time is calculated by adding the days of travel to the 7 days of permit.

The leave goes from the midday of the day of departure to the midday of the day of return¹¹².

From these guidelines, we can evince that the role played by military interpreters during World War I and II was varied and risky. “L’interprète militaire est avant tout soldat” wrote Van Hoof (1962: 26), and this status obliged the interpreter to respect a specific code of conduct and strict regulations.

Due to the World Wars, we saw the birth of a real profession and also a school of military interpreting. From the pioneering

¹¹² Armée Belge, 1917: 11-59, in *Aide-Mémoire de l’Interprète Belge*.

experience of the Belgian Corps we will see, in the following chapter, how this profession continued to develop in the 20th century, and how it was structured distinctly from state to state.

PART II

Picture of the current situation

Chapter IV

THE CURRENT SITUATION: PEACE INTERPRETERS ON DUTY

4.1 WHAT HAS CHANGED

With the end of World War II we enter into a new phase of military interpreting.

If the First World War officially set the ball rolling and the Second gave it momentum, it took several decades that we can witness its complete recognition as indispensable tool in international relations. The range of action of military interpreters has expanded according to the direct consequences of the wars and conflicts that brought about a growing need to maintain an international geo-political balance of powers and the speeding up of the process of globalization.

“Interpreting tasks are always a challenge and working as a military interpreter can be character-building (or indeed the opposite!)”

Military Interpreter David Anderson, 2000: 2

The setting up of military trials for war crimes such as the Nuremberg Trials (October 1945 – November 1946) and the Tokyo Trials (May 1946 – November 1948)¹¹³, the creation of a specialized defense alliance for the collective security of some countries, NATO (April 4, 1949), and the closer relations among the victorious allied nations of the war – on the one hand – and the starting of multi-forces peacekeeping operations (1948), rebuilding and relief missions under the UN umbrella –

¹¹³ Shveitser, 1999: 23.

on the other – contributed enormously to the demand for professional military interpreters on two different fronts: in a formal diplomatic setting and directly on the field at the service of their respective armies.

At the institutional level, military interpreters were formally engaged in the same functions as those of civil personnel in the headquarters of national ministries of defense, in international military organizations such as NATO, in embassies, in diplomatic offices, in military trials such as Nuremberg, or as personal interpreters of important leaders or dictators (Hitler, Churchill, Stalin) during bilateral or multilateral meetings.

At the army-assistance level instead, they went abroad alongside their respective armed forces (or as UN military observers) in what we learnt in time to call peace-building and peacekeeping operations, reconstruction and relief missions, and population assistance.

These services are the two sides of the same coin and underpin the modern concept of ‘military interpreter’¹¹⁴.

4.2 THE INSTITUTIONAL FACET

¹¹⁴ As described in Chapter I, 1.2.

4.2.1 At the international level

After the Paris Peace Conference (1919), which saw the formal engagement of military interpreters in a diplomatic setting, it is with the Nuremberg Trials that the big powers of the world got involved for the second time in history in a very delicate international assembly challenged by the problem of multilingual communication. The decision to carry out the Main War Crimes Trial in four languages – English German, French, and Russian – generated concern and anxiety about how the participants in the trial would communicate with each other¹¹⁵.

Due to the primarily military/legal nature of the issues discussed, the choice was that of providing the different sessions, in part, with military interpreters/translators, and in part, with qualified personnel competent in the matter who had spent part of their life both in the US and in Germany and could therefore master the two languages professionally.

Unlike the previous conferences, in which improvised interpreters had to measure themselves against a completely new job learning on the spot, Nuremberg is remembered in the history of interpreting as a remarkable and innovative moment. Due to its large-scale scope, the involvement of the international press and the relevance of its sentences, the linguistic organization was unprecedented¹¹⁶.

After the so called ‘linguistic success’ of the Nuremberg experience with the appearance of the simultaneous

¹¹⁵ Gaiba, 1999: 11.

¹¹⁶ Gaiba, 1999: 10-11.

interpretation technique¹¹⁷, military interpreters were subsequently employed in the new-born United Nations Organization (UN) and its specialized agencies – on June 26, 1945 the League of Nations was superseded by the United Nations Organization – and in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization¹¹⁸ (NATO) created in April, 1949.

The creation of such international organizations contributed to the scrupulous selection of the interpreters, who did not improvise their job anymore – as seen in the past – but rather were trained, tested and chosen in accordance to specific standards. The first interpretation schools made their appearance in these very years¹¹⁹.

If in the past in fact, the discontinuity of international conferences and the limited market available forced interpreters to have a second job to make a living, now military and civilian

¹¹⁷ Simultaneous interpretation is the most commonly used technique in multilingual meetings nowadays. As the word implies, the interpreter translates at the same time that the speaker utters. Simultaneous interpretation substituted almost completely consecutive interpretation used until that moment, in which the interpreter takes notes during the speech to deliver it in another language afterwards. The simultaneous technique reduces the time of the sessions and makes the meetings less heavy and cumbersome. But it requires a special electronic equipment of microphones and headphones to function.

¹¹⁸ To which Chapter V is dedicated.

¹¹⁹ The first official school for interpreters and translators was founded in Mannheim (1930), with the *Institut zur sprach- und wirtschaftswissenschaftlichen Ausbildung von Dolmetschern*. A second school was founded in 1937 in Leipzig. The German precedents were echoed after few years by Switzerland with the Interpretation School of Geneva in 1941. In the same year, Genf saw the creation of a similar institute, followed by Germersheim (1946), the *Höhere Fachschule für Dolmetscher und Übersetzer* of Cologne (1946), the university of Saarbrücken (1948), Heidelberg (1950) and the Institute of Munich (1952).

France opened its first official interpretation school in Paris (1948) and then the ESIT (*Ecole Supérieure d'Interprètes et de Traducteurs*) in 1957, while Austria gave life to the first interpreting course in Vienna (1943). In 1954 the USA founded an Institute of Linguistics at the Georgetown University of Washington. In the same year, Brussels saw the creation of a course of interpretation at the *Ecole Supérieure de Jeunes Filles*. Canada gave life to the course of *Maîtrise en Traduction* at the university of Montreal in 1951. In Italy, the first official school for interpreters and translators was founded in Trieste, *Scuola Superiore di Lingue Moderne per Interpreti e Traduttori* (1954). In 1961, Belgium established in Anvers the *Ecole Supérieure de Traducteurs et d'Interprètes*. (See: Andres, 2002: 14 and Van Hoof, 1962: 22-23).

interpreters started to do just that, i.e. interpreting in a full-time position.

Because interpreting is so human an activity, involving a direct, immediate and highly personal act of mediation between individuals, often with strong personalities, it has always had a history of problems. There are issues of loyalty – interpreters jumping ship or changing sides – along with breaches of etiquette or even ethics. The enhanced professional status and the creation of professional interpreters' associations and training schools have led to the formulation of appropriate ethical standards¹²⁰.

The quality of the interpreter's output depends on many factors: the professional qualification as a result of natural gifts, training and professional experience, the quality of the technical environment, i.e. work-space, ventilation, lighting, seating arrangement and acoustic, preparation of the subject matter before the meeting, duration of the sittings, and last but not least the interpreter's fitness on that particular day¹²¹.

To perform as an interpreter at the institutional/diplomatic level in the decades following World War II, one did not only have to have a complete understanding of one or more foreign languages and an excellent fluency in at least one of them (beside the mother tongue), but it was also necessary to possess other natural abilities, according to Baigorri (2000: 89-90-91) and Keiser (1978:12-13-14). Such talents were tacitly requested in order to perform in the new-born international organizations:

¹²⁰ Delisle & Woodsworth, 1995: 273.

¹²¹ Keiser, 1978: 11-12.

Physical and physiological aptitudes

The military, as well as the general interpreter, had to be in good health, had to have a good-balanced nervous system, nice voice, clear and distinctive pronunciation, good breathing, good hearing and good sight to follow the speakers' gesture or the notes taken.

Psychical aptitudes

The interpreter had also to have a lively and wide-awake intelligence, quick understanding, intuition, spirit of analysis, easy elocution, good verbal and logical memory, imagination to rebuild the speech, quick association of ideas, swiftness of translation, capacity of concentration and resistance to distraction, presence of mind, aplomb, coolness, moral qualities of dignity and discretion, diplomatic behavior, tact and prudence, professional secrecy and also courage to interrupt the speaker in the case of a misunderstanding.

Knowledge

As to the interpreter's personal background, he was requested to provide a three-level knowledge:

- a) Deep linguistic and cultural know-how of especially the interpreter's mother tongue;
- b) General erudition above all of law, philosophy, mathematics, politics, economics, to be well informed about 'everything';
- c) Specific understanding and knowledge of the topic discussed. Hence the interpreter had to study and prepare for any feasible issue.

Deontological hygiene

Because the excessively long sessions or speeches, the nature or the atmosphere of the meetings, the character of the topic, and the clearness or the lack of it of the utterance are all causes of fatigue and mental tiredness for the interpreters, to limit difficulties of understanding, expression, attention, synthesis, memory, and mastery of nerves, the interpreter had to be careful with sleeping sufficiently, digesting correctly, and maintaining a clear and healthy voice.

At the same time, he had to provide a linguistic hygiene, keeping his means of expression at an adequate level and looking for a consistent language purity.

4.2.2 At the national level

If this was the situation of the late 40s and the mid 50s at the international level, with the passing of the years, with the opening of Higher Schools for Interpreters and Translators all over the world¹²², and with the birth of several national and international associations of interpreters and translators, all the big international organizations substituted the team of interpreters who came from the military field with civilians graduated from one of these specialized schools. Even a military institution, such as NATO, now provides its interpretation and translation service thanks to civil personnel, as described in Chapter V.

¹²² Ibidem note 7.

Today, the engagement of military interpreters falls, in each country, under the responsibility of the national Ministry of Defense and its general staff, which may provide the translation/interpretation services through military, civil personnel or free-lance interpreters according to specific needs.

Since nowadays there is no homogeneity in the employment of military interpreters among different countries, talking about ‘military interpreters’ in general is dangerous, and we rather have to refer to a specific nation. There are states which do not have military interpreters at all in the defense field, states which just started to train them, while others have a rich heritage¹²³.

What can be described in general terms is the service offered at the institutional level, that is within the administration of ministries and staffs.

Here, military and civil interpreters carry out the same tasks, which range from the written translation of documents to the oral interpretation in bilateral meetings. In the majority of the countries analyzed, there is no clear distinction between a translator and an interpreter; the personnel carry out both activities according to the specific needs of the moment.

Generally speaking, the translator/interpreter must:

- provide the translation of all official documentation (letters, messages, documents) to and from NATO or other international organizations;
- provide the translation of any relevant and interesting publication and document edited by the general staff;
- provide consulting assistance in the case of linguistic doubts;

¹²³ Chapter V will analyze the current situation of military interpreters in 13 countries.

- guarantee consecutive and simultaneous interpretation services in combined workshops, international seminars, all-level bilateral and multilateral meetings, and official visits;
- prepare and manage the proceedings for the recruitment of free-lance personnel;
- (in some cases) cooperate in the organization of international conferences or bilateral meetings.

The documents to be translated or interpreted can be generally of three types:

- 1) documents of general contents (such as speeches), with complex structure but using easy terminology;
- 2) technical lists or manuals, edited in a schematic form, with complex terminology but easy structure;
- 3) orders, something in-between the previous two¹²⁴.

The three examples¹²⁵ of real texts used by the Italian General Staff – provided in Appendix 9 –may help to understand the differences.

It is clear that the interpreter's approach toward these three types of text is different.

A speech is generally given during a high level seminar, and it has a communicative nature and few terminological problems but a complex syntax. It requires understanding, interpretation, simplification, and rapidity.

On the other hand, a technical list or an order is discussed at lower level workshops and provide mainly a programmatic

¹²⁴ Cappelli, 2004: 1-10.

¹²⁵ Examples taken from Cappelli, 2004: 1-32, 1-33.

aspect. The language used is complex and specific. In these cases, the interpreter will have to translate almost verbatim the original text without any interpretation.

Once again it is evident how important the military background is in approaching topics and issues almost incomprehensible for ordinary people.

Thus, military interpreters, beside their personal general knowledge, will have to be trained adequately to carry out their work and to possess the interpretation/translation techniques necessary. The type of training that military interpreters receive in each country will be described separately for each country in Chapter V, since the differences between states do not make it possible to have a common, general description.

The role considered so far is the one played by military interpreters at the institutional level. However, there is another scenario, in which these servicemen operate, that deserves our attention because of the difficulties and the risks it offers, and the preparation it requires: it is the case of the Peace Support Operations.

4.3 PEACE SUPPORT OPERATIONS (PSOs)

With the term *Peacekeeping*, we generally refer to nonbelligerent use of military force to assist warring parties in reaching a settlement.

Traditional peacekeeping missions try to maintain peace while the parties negotiate a settlement, but peacekeeping forces have performed a variety of other operations, including observation, separation of combatants, protection of civilians, and maintenance of supplies and communications. These forces have also provided humanitarian relief, monitored human rights practices, and supervised elections¹²⁶.

Historically, peacekeeping is a relatively new practice that has usually been organized under the United Nations (UN).

The UN has three qualifications for peacekeeping missions: consent of the disputants; support from the international community; and the deployment of impartial forces. The peacekeeping forces are lightly armed for self-defense.

These peacekeeping operations under the umbrella of the UN have been manifold. It is worth describing the main ones.

The UN's first peacekeeping effort was sending observers to the Middle East in 1948 to supervise the truce negotiated after the Arab attack on Israel earlier in the year. In 1956 the First United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF I) was sent in response to the Suez Canal crisis; the peacekeepers' mission was to oversee the withdrawal of French, British, and Israeli troops from the area and to act as a buffer between Israeli and Egyptian troops.

The UN also established missions to help former European colonies become independent countries, beginning with India and Pakistan in 1948.

¹²⁶ Peacekeeping."Microsoft® Encarta® Encyclopedia 2001. © 1993-2000 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.

In 1991 the UN negotiated a peace treaty that included UN monitored elections to end the civil war in Cambodia. After the collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in 1991, ethnic tensions increased; in 1993 the UN sent observers into Georgia, formerly part of the USSR, to help maintain a cease-fire that had been negotiated between Georgia and Abkhazia, one of its autonomous republics. The UN has also worked to end civil strife, such as its efforts in Somalia. There, the UN worked to ensure humanitarian relief in order to prevent widespread starvation. It also worked with different tribal clans in Somalia to recreate a legitimate government, and to reestablish social institutions.

As of December 1994 the UN had undertaken 35 peacekeeping missions, involving more than 600,000 people. In conducting these missions, it confronted several problems. The increased number of calls for peacekeeping missions in the 1990s put a serious financial strain on the UN and impaired its ability to respond. Another major problem was the tendency for operations to stagnate while the underlying dispute dragged on, perhaps actually prolonged by the element of stability introduced by the peacekeeping forces. Another problem was the UN's lack of enforcement power. If the disputants did not respect UN decisions, it could not require compliance. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, in 1995, the Bosnian Serbs bombed UN safe areas and seized UN peacekeepers, and the UN had to turn to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) for help. The situation in Bosnia forced the UN to examine its ability to maintain peace versus its ability to enforce it. One possibility suggested by the secretary general of the UN in May

1995 was replacing the UN peacekeeping forces with an international military force.

The UN finds itself once again in the eye of the storm with the current Iraq crisis, which raises the question of the need for innovating its structure and modifying its proceedings.

No international permanent military force has been created so far, but traditional peacekeeping – interpositional military forces monitoring a cease-fire – has piecemeal given way to other forms of peacekeeping after the rise of internal armed conflicts in which genocide, or other ethnical cleansing, targeted civilians.

It can be said that peacekeeping operations display now an increased level of military humanitarianism. After resolution 688 (1991), authorizing UN intervention to protect Kurds in Northern Iraq from Iraqi forces following the Gulf War, Kurt M. Campbell¹²⁷ makes the following concluding remarks in relation to this subject:

With humanitarian intervention in Iraq, the international community may be perched on the brick of a new era in which states will codify the principles and identify the appropriate conditions when humanitarian imperatives will override domestic jurisdiction. Military humanitarianism provides a bridge between Cold

¹²⁷ Senior vice president and director of the international security program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies of Washington, former professor at the Kennedy School of Government, former officer of the US Department of Defense, of the White House, and of the National Security Council.

War military capabilities and the vision of new world order proponents.

(Weisse & Campbell, 1991: 463-464, quoted in Monacelli, 2002: 184)

The inclusion of civilians (non-governmental organizations, international relief and development agencies) in the planning and undertaking of modern peacekeeping had led to the use of the term 'peace support operations', or PSOs, to describe today's complex missions. Hence, the major challenge in this new context is the partnership between civil and military components of these missions and their relative aims concerning relations with local groups, that notably led to conflict and misunderstandings. Knowledge of what lies at the basis of these challenging missions is the key to understanding and coping with the tension involved in face-to-face mediated encounters.

In all missions there are 'purely military' and 'purely civil' tasks, but also a gray area where the military takes part in civilian operations. These operations include humanitarian aid, infrastructure reconstruction, political leadership and the repatriation of refugees (Griffin 1998: 5, quoted in Monacelli, 2002: 184). It is right in this area where the presence of military interpreters is vital.

Military participation in civilian operations is motivated by a number of reasons:

- it creates goodwill and thereby increased security for the unit and the soldiers benefit from being able to carry out something concrete for the local population;

- civilian operations can provide a means for obtaining information and intelligence in areas to which it might otherwise be difficult to gain access;
- certain resources (roads, electricity, water, etc.) are vital to the military units and may have to be secured through civil operations;
- in some cases, the military units may be the only ones to deliver aid to a certain area.

Military motivation to carry out civilian operations implies negotiating at varying levels in order to reduce tensions and strengthen mechanisms for peaceful conflict resolution.

In essence, military interpreters involved in PSOs participate in the pursuit of security by means of stability which implies managing instability, in something that Monacelli (2000:184) calls 'dynamic equilibrium'. An equilibrium that is definitely not easy to reach in such dangerous and risky conditions.

4.3.1 The UN

Peace Support Operations can be managed at two different levels; at the international level, through the UN, and at the national level, through the respective national armies. In most cases – any time there is the approval by the UN to intervene in a conflict or crisis through a UN Council Resolution – the forces involved in the operations find themselves working side by side and sharing the many responsibilities.

As to the UN, the several missions described above have been – and continue to be – carried out by the United Nations Peacekeeping Forces (the so called ‘Blue Helmets’), that is agents of the United Nations (UN) who help to maintain or restore peace in regions of conflict.

The peacekeeping forces comprise either unarmed observers or lightly armed military personnel from UN member nations. They traditionally enter conflicts after the combatants have declared a truce but before they have signed a formal peace treaty.

In 1956 the United Nations armed its peacekeeping forces for the first time. The forces successfully helped to settle the Suez Crisis, an armed conflict between Egypt and the combined forces of France, Britain, and Israel over control of the Suez Canal. The UN secretary general at the time, Dag Hammarskjöld, established guidelines for the peacekeeping forces that remain intact today. Under these principles, UN forces may only initiate peacekeeping activities if all parties in the conflict agree to their presence. In addition, the troops may not use violence to accomplish their mission, only negotiation; the troops must serve under the exclusive command of the UN Security Council; all member nations of the UN must financially support the forces; and armed troops may fire their weapons only in self-defense. Individual soldiers serving on peacekeeping missions wear the uniform of their own country. They also wear a distinctive blue hat or helmet to identify them as part of the peacekeeping forces.

During the 1980s and 1990s, UN forces helped to restore peace in several regional conflicts. Their accomplishments included

helping to maintain cease-fires following the Iran-Iraq War in 1988 and following the wars in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina during the mid- and late-1990s. In 1997, there were 18,000 peacekeepers and 2000 civilians serving in 15 UN operations, down from a peak of 78,000 peacekeepers serving in 1994. By 1998 troops from 110 countries had served in 42 peacekeeping operations, and nearly 1400 peacekeepers had died in the line of duty¹²⁸.

Among these Peacekeeping Forces, military interpreters play a fundamental role. They represent an important bridge between the forces and the local population.

Without interpreters in most cases the UN Military Observers (UNMOs) would not be able to communicate with either of the warring parties.

Among the interpreters' tasks, it is worth mentioning:

- to accompany the UNMOs to investigate and report on cease-fire violations;
- to monitor and report on violations of the Total Exclusion Zones (which prohibits all warring parties from having artillery, heavy mortars and tanks within a specific area);
- when necessary to place the UNMOs teams between warring parties to deter a return to open firing;
- to attempt, where possible, to resolve problems through negotiations involving both sides in joint sessions;

¹²⁸ United Nations Peacekeeping Forces."Microsoft® Encarta® Encyclopedia 2001. © 1993-2000 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.

- in general, to act as a communication bridge between the warring parties at all levels, particularly when they would not meet with each other¹²⁹.

Their training, background and general knowledge must be adequate since in such contexts the material to be translated/interpreted may be delicate and various, ranging from treaties or laws, press releases, user manuals and engineering plans, to handwritten letters, medical textbooks, historical documents, etc.

4.3.2 The single states

At the national level instead, each country organizes its PSOs distinctly. The interpreters employed can be military as well as civilians; they can be permanent personnel of the armed forces or free-lance, they can even be hired locally on the spot, according to the provisions issued by each single Ministry of Defense (as described in Chapter V).

These interpreters do not only function as linguistic and cultural bridge between the army and the local population, but also as a fundamental link within the possible allied coalition of forces speaking different languages and operating in the same territory.

The cooperation among different armies, in fact, can range from the mutual support – different tasks are assigned to different units, such as healthcare or food supply – to multi-forces operations in which the armies engaged in a common tactic activity or a military action come from different

¹²⁹ Thomas, 1995: 9.

countries, to the very essence of communication, that is the exchange of documentation in a common language or the linguistic interface during meetings and encounters.

As it is clearly conceivable, in the military field all documents shared by several armies must be immediately decoded and understood by all sides because they often turn into concrete actions.

At the same time, in order to guarantee the satisfactory interaction among multilingual units, there is the need to draw up all documents in a common language. A sort of *lingua franca* adequately adapted to the military context, that is simplified and bare, considering the fact that the majority of its readers will not be native speakers of this language.

Nowadays, the language used in the coalitions of forces is English – gaining relevance over French after World War I as seen in Chapter II, 2.4 – one reason being its simplicity in style and form.

In such circumstances, it is worth rewarding clearness and intelligibility of a text, over terminological or stylistic affectation, and English is often considered to be the most suitable language to undergo such modifications¹³⁰.

Once again, Chapter V will go more into details of the description of the employment of military interpreters in the different national armies, since there is a lack of homogeneity among them, and presenting them in a generalized way may result inadequate.

¹³⁰ Personal communication.

What we can say in an overall description is the fact that military interpreters chosen to accompany their respective units in PSOs are under the responsibility of the national Ministry of Defense, namely the so called ‘Central Bodies’ – such as Army or Defense General Staff – which decide, coordinate and organize their engagement.

4.3.3 Role, tasks, techniques

Apart from the position covered by a military interpreter in the defense sector – UN, national general staffs, PSOs – the role played is always vital as well as extremely delicate. ‘Who will talk?’ is indeed a challenge faced by most teams or units working in a foreign environment.

In this context it is not absurd to say that an error in translating may cause severe risks, if not a worsening of existing conflicts. The areas in which these servicemen find themselves to work are powder kegs, places of instability and sometimes even scenes of appalling human rights atrocities.

Military interpreters perform their duties under extreme conditions. They face physical danger from shelling, sniping or mines, intimidation and even harassment by either or both of the warring parties, possibilities of attacks, traffic accidents, hostages as well as casualties.

But what are they called to do exactly?

1. First of all, in PSOs with regard to the local population, military interpreters (or civil/local interpreters as described in

the following section) are involved in what has come to be considered as a very special form of ‘community interpreting’. That is assisting local communities in the provision of their service¹³¹.

They must create an aura of credibility around the mission they are involved in. It is essential that everyone understands why and how the mission must operate in order, for the armed forces, to be perceived as ‘friends’ willing to make things better.

To the extent that without communication there can be no negotiation, communication is obviously integral to the success of any mission.

Of course, the more the interpreters make themselves understand and know local customs, habits, traditions, and the culture of the country torn apart by a conflict, the better the quality of their work and the respect by the locals will be.

Solid, thorough preparation for dealing with an unfamiliar culture can often mean the difference between success and failure in peacekeeping missions. This is why the interpreters’ personal background plays a fundamental role in carry out their duty.

Another important task military interpreters have to perform among the local population is the gathering of relevant information for their mission. A task that, once again, requires trust and frankness by the locals.

The intelligence, personality and street smartness of an interpreter can be crucial in helping to convey his/her point across linguistic and cultural barriers. The interpreter is the military specialist in public relations. He can give suggestions

¹³¹ Edwards, 2002 in *Translation Journal Online*.

on the best way to proceed with a person from a different cultural background, and may notice nuances that would otherwise be overlooked.

Unfortunately, the essential elements of protocol and etiquette to be respected in other cultures may be absent in the anarchy of 'hot wars' negotiations. In such circumstances, the interpreter's work becomes very dangerous and filled with hidden ambushes as many adopt the philosophy that anything is fair in a war¹³².

2. Secondly, military interpreters represent an important link between coalition forces speaking different languages.

In these cases, they are called mainly to assist 'language-impaired' superiors to communicate with the respective allies acting as the lips of senior officers (face-to-face communication, translation of documents, processes of co-decision, exchanges of information, etc.), or to coordinate linguistically multi-forces shared operations such as: food supply, organization of health system, logistics, transportation, local administration, setting up of hospitals, etc.

Military interpreters in PSOs do not work normal hours. If necessary, they work 24 hours a day, or non-stop for 4/5 days. This of course, leads to fatigue and the danger of not being able to maintain the required standards¹³³.

As to the technique used, peacekeeping negotiations in the field, often employ 'background interpreting' or 'chuchotage'

¹³² Edwards, 2002 in *Translation Journal Online*.

¹³³ Personal communication.

(consecutive interpretation with notes is also used but generally only during formal meetings).

Chuchotage is one-to-one direct translation where the interpreter ‘whispers’ the translation for up to three persons who are to receive the interpretation. For best results, the principals should make statements in short paragraph-sized ‘blocks’, speak at a normal speed and tone of voice, express their thoughts in a clear, logical order and avoid acronyms, slang or jargon. These parameters are not always respected though¹³⁴.

4.4 MILITARY VERSUS CIVIL PERSONNEL

The choice of choosing the employment of military interpreters instead of civil interpreters or vice versa falls under the responsibility of each single General Staff.

States like Germany or Spain, for example, provide their armed forces and the defense offices mainly with civil interpreters. Norway and Belgium, in turn, make use exclusively of military personnel, while Italy, Great Britain or the United States integrate the two possibilities recurring to both services.

The reasons for such decisions are based on specific needs, national history, laws and customs of every single nation. These will be considered specifically in the next chapter.

¹³⁴ Edwards, 2002 in *Translation Journal Online*.

Yet, it can be generally said that the choice of turning to civil interpreters instead of military ones is due primarily to the type of professional training and qualification the former possess. Civil interpreters, in fact, are accurately selected according to specific standards¹³⁵, and after passing interpretation/translation tests. They must have a previous diploma, qualification or degree (from courses not provided by the defense) in translation/interpretation – in at least two languages – to be suitable for the job.

Civil interpreters may be employed as defense personnel with a short-term/long-term contract in what is called the ‘Linguistic Sector’ of the defense. Generally, there are different hierarchical categories in this field:

- Linguistic Assistant;
- Translator/Interpreter;
- Reviser Translator/Interpreter;
- Coordinator Translator/Interpreter¹³⁶.

Their tasks are the same as those of military interpreters as described previously, in section 4.2.

Civil interpreters are also employed in PSOs under conditions that vary from state to state. Tasks and functions do not differ from those of military personnel (see section 4.3.3).

On the other hand, the decision to turn to military instead of civil interpreters¹³⁷ is based mainly on ad-hoc situations and

¹³⁵ Generally NATO STANG 6001 ‘Language Proficiency Standard’ with 5 levels of linguistic ability: Level 1 – Elementary; Level 2 – Limited Working; Level 3 – Minimum Professional; Level 4 – Full Professional; Level 5 – Native/Bilingual.

¹³⁶ Cappelli, 2004: 1-5.

specific needs. For example, in the case in which the workload is exceeding the common available resources; or when it is necessary to have linguistic personnel with targeted knowledge (i.e. an artilleryman in the preparation of a conference on artillery); or at any time, during PSOs, when, for security reasons, the interpreter must be armed or must intervene in exclusively military activities¹³⁸.

As to the training of military interpreters, the majority of the nations subsequently analyzed provide for Military Schools/Institutes of Languages, in which future interpreters learn foreign languages and acquire familiarity with the skills and techniques necessary to carry out their job.

4.5 LOCAL INTERPRETERS

Due to the lack of personnel acquainted with ‘rare’, uncommon or simply difficult languages, on many occasions¹³⁹, national armies engaged in PSOs are not provided with military interpreters, and have to rely often on local ‘improvised’ interpreters.

Maintaining high standards in the identification and selection of translators and interpreters is the key to guaranteeing the professional expertise of the staff and their respect for professional ethics with a view to increasing the efficiency and

¹³⁷ In the case the nation does not provide the defense sector exclusively with military interpreters.

¹³⁸ Personal communication.

¹³⁹ To mention a couple of examples, the recent case of Afghanistan or Iraq.

security of the process. Yet, unfortunately, this is not always feasible in conflict circumstances.

The primary prerequisites for a successful locally engaged language assistant are language proficiency, competence and unbiased attitude. Clearly, the candidate should be bilingual, or at least fluent, in source and target languages. An oral selection process is essential for proper assessment of the general knowledge and aptitude for interpretation of prospective candidates.

Secondly, it is necessary that the candidates be competent in that they should be able to work quickly and accurately.

Thirdly, finding locally engaged candidates who do not hold major biases that will affect the quality of interpretation is not only crucial, but may be the most difficult aspect in the selection of these local interpreters¹⁴⁰.

Generally, locally engaged interpreters are classified as 'language assistants' and are treated as local staff. This means that they are individual contractors employed under Special Service Agreement. They have some formal education but no formal training as interpreters or translators.

When working with non-professional interpreters during such PSOs missions, there is a personal risk of reprisals and an added stress of working in danger zones. In addition, the risk of the following issues damaging the interpreter's credibility are heightened: political and ideological beliefs, religious convictions, motivation or involvement and confidentiality¹⁴¹.

¹⁴⁰ Edwards, 2002 in *Translation Journal Online*.

¹⁴¹ Thomas, 1995: 8-10.

It is vital to remember the safety of locally engaged interpreters as, in most cases, they do not leave the field when the respective army does.

Locally-engaged language assistants working for PSOs in fact, perform their duties under extreme conditions, in the presence of physical danger from shelling, sniping or mines, intimidation and harassment, disapproval of friends and neighbors, blackmail to provide information or other services to the local police or military. They can be also subjected to expressions of community disapproval. Many locally engaged interpreters undergo traumatic experiences, either directly or indirectly, like persecution, torture, violence, terror, hardships and reprisals against themselves or their family members.

The systematic killing of suspected linguistic collaborators of the ‘invading’ forces by unknown people continues to be reported today, for instance, from countries like Iraq or Afghanistan, where local civilian interpreters are regularly executed due to their employment among the Coalition Forces¹⁴².

After peacekeepers are gone, the authorities will likely debrief locally engaged staff.

¹⁴² Information taken from: <http://www.warnews.it> (consulted in January 2005).

4.6 RANKS AND MILITARY CONSTRAINTS

The concept of ‘dynamic equilibrium’ seen previously implies also another aspect in a military interpreter’s activity, namely the respect of the hierarchy and specific military constraints.

Monacelli (2002: 185-186) gives us a detailed analysis of what this means. In a situation where military interpreters provide services to their country’s army officers, the question of ‘neutrality’ is presumably non-existent. But aside from issues linked to loyalty, there are a series of specific constraints imposed on face-to-face communication in a military context.

Commanders in NATO countries are specifically trained to make the most of face-to-face communication. When this involves the use of interpreters, they are sensitized to the importance of the interpreter’s role and are informed how to maximize an interpreter’s strength and how to neutralize and anticipate possible weaknesses.

It could sound banal and insignificant, but a first step to successful interpreter-mediated communication is the establishment of a genuine and honest rapport with interpreters. If interviewers are officers, for instance, it is recommended that either an officer or a civilian act as interpreter. It is worth noting that civilian interpreters are often preferred when military interviewees are not officers, so as to avoid intimidation.

Here, the question of a military interpreter's rank, in relation to the interviewer, only marginally influences the interpreter's work, since a serviceman's rank is always relative to a hierarchy and presumably nothing would change. In other words, should there be a Captain acting as interpreter for a Major, the relationship is always to be considered one of subordination, regardless of whether they are working in an office or on the field¹⁴³.

Officers are specifically instructed to advise the interpreter to mirror their tone and not to interject his/her own questions. Officers, in turn, must always keep their eyes focused on their interlocutors and not on the interpreter.

What seems to emerge is a view of interpreters similar to that in legal settings where they are considered 'disembodied containers of others' messages' (Wadensjö, 1998: 279 quoted in Monacelli, 2002: 186). This is, however, in stark contrast with what Major Thomas stresses as being the most important qualities of the interpreters with which he worked, namely courage and the ability to persuade (Thomas, 1995: 12).

Interestingly, officers are also informed never to criticize an interpreter in the presence of the interlocutor, thus avoiding the impairment of his effectiveness.

4.7 ALTERNATIVES

¹⁴³ Monacelli, 2002: 186.

We saw how difficult and delicate military a interpreters' mission is; how costly in terms of training, readiness, ability, human lives; how indispensable for the reaching of negotiations or peaceful solutions. In addition to all this, western interpreters of 'rare' languages such as Arabic, Kurdish, Persian etc. are in short supply nowadays.

The Afghanistan or the Iraq cases brought to light the problem of using almost exclusively local 'improvised' interpreters, and at the same time the research of alternative solutions to bridge the linguistic gap.

It could sound unprofessional or ridiculous to somebody, but about 200 American and British military personnel in Iraq are communicating with the locals using a hand-held device into which soldiers speak English phrases to have them sounded out in either Arabic or Kurdish.

The device, called a *Phraselator*, is designed to help compensate for the shortage of linguists, and according to many, it already has proven its worth. It has been used successfully in situations where there has been the need to locate caches of weapons or the need to identify places where troops were hiding.

Before Iraq, the device has been used by Americans in Afghanistan for about a year to reach residents there in four different languages.

The Phraselator uses a particular speech-recognition technology (developed in the United States). This technology recognizes standardized phrases phonetically and then emits the equivalent pre-recorded phrase in Arabic, Kurdish or another foreign language. A 64-megabyte flash card can hold 30,000 phrases.

But Phraselator is not perfect at all. It is limited by how carefully and clearly people speak into the device, so the phrases are recognized phonetically. According to the American Translators Association then, it is not a translation device, but simply a phrase matcher, which can be a last-ditch solution when there are no interpreters or multilingual people around, and there are messages one must convey to people who speak a foreign language.

According to some authors, this solution takes you from zero communication to 5 or 10 percent communication, not more. The mistakes are many¹⁴⁴.

Technology devices such as this one could in part contribute to bypass linguistic barriers in delicate contexts, but despite any possible future development, they will never be able to substitute the human brain and its sensitivity. As we saw, interpreting does not only mean transposing a message word by word from one source language to one target language, but it is a larger and more complex process which changes according to the conditions in which it takes place, which implies general knowledge, culture, association of ideas, reasoning, adaptation, intelligence, tact and beyond-the-lines understanding. These are all aspects that an intelligence-free device is not able to provide.

¹⁴⁴ Price, 2003 in *Gadget jumps language barrier*.

Chapter V

NATO'S FOUNDING NATIONS: A POLYCHROME WHOLE

5.1 NATO

This chapter will be entirely dedicated to the analysis and description of the military language and training that military interpreters receive in the founding nations: Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, Norway, Portugal, United Kingdom, United States, and the addition of Germany.

The reason to add Germany to this compact is that Western Germany entered NATO only in 1955.

On the fact that, historically, this country held a significant position on the world stage during World War I and II, overshadowing nations like Iceland or Portugal, that, despite their membership in the Atlantic Pact, never recorded a high-profile position at the international level.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is an intergovernmental organization whose core purpose is the collective defense of its members by political and military means in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Charter. The fundamental operating principle of the Alliance is the indivisibility of the security of its members.

“Acting as the ‘lips’ in a military environment is always a great challenge to one’s ability as an interpreter, one’s mental and physical stamina and one’s sense of humor, but, having dealt successfully with the problems, the rewards are without equal.”

NATO was created in April 1949 when the North Atlantic Treaty was signed in Washington by 12 countries with the aim of bringing into being a common security against a potential threat resulting from the policies and growing military capacity of the Soviet Union.

After the demise of the Berlin Wall, the Alliance initiated a major adaptation and transformation process. The Strategic Concept adopted at the 1991 Rome Summit Meeting provided for a new approach that would include a streamlining of NATO's military command structure, and major changes in its integrated forces and role in crisis management and peacekeeping¹⁴⁵.

Today NATO's purpose is to enhance the stability, well-being, and freedom of its members through a system of collective security. That is, members of the alliance agree to defend one another from attack by other nations. Over the years the existence of NATO has led to closer ties among its members and to a growing community of interests. The treaty itself has provided a model for other collective security agreements¹⁴⁶.

5.1.1 Interpretation at NATO

¹⁴⁵ Information taken from [Hhttp://www.aiic.net/community/print/default.cfm/page291](http://www.aiic.net/community/print/default.cfm/page291)H (consulted in September 2004).

¹⁴⁶ "North Atlantic Treaty Organization." *Microsoft® Encarta® Encyclopedia 2001*. © 1993-2000 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.

Even though NATO has primarily a military structure, the interpretation service is carried out exclusively by civil personnel¹⁴⁷.

NATO's interpretation section is part of the Conference Services, itself a component of the International Staff where nationals of all member nations may be employed.

Official languages are English and French. However, Russian can be an asset as meetings where that language is used have become a regular occurrence.

Over the last few years, the growing number of new bodies has resulted in a significant increase in the day-to-day workload of the interpreters, and free-lance recruitment is definitely on the rise.

The interpreting technique primarily used is simultaneous interpreting, while consecutive interpretation is seldom employed.

Any applicant to a position as a staff interpreter at NATO must be a national from one of the member nations as well as a graduate from an acknowledged interpretation school, or he/she must show proof of several years' experience in interpretation. Candidates should possess good general knowledge, adapt easily, enjoy teamwork and be reasonably healthy. Working hours vary from day to day and are often unpredictable.

Mandatory requirements for a free-lance or an in-house recruitment include:

- 1) undergoing an interpretation test;

¹⁴⁷ National military interpreters may accompany, at times, their respective commanders or senior officers to NATO for multilateral meetings.

- 2) obtaining a security clearance;
- 3) holding an interview with the management.

The applicant first meets briefly with a jury of seasoned interpreters. Then the actual test begins, including sight translation¹⁴⁸, consecutive interpretation, and simultaneous interpretation, with a far greater emphasis on the latter.

The test is very realistic and runs the gamut of NATO specialties, be it a budget committee debate, an operational report, the latest on European security policy or underwater search and rescue.

Shortly after completing the test, the successful applicant is requested (by mail) to fill in forms required for the security clearance investigation. The procedure may well take a full year and involves investigations in all countries where the applicant has resided. Recruitment can only be effective after the security clearance has been finalized¹⁴⁹.

5.1.2 NATO members

As outlined in Chapter IV, and as the above description corroborates, the selection of professional civilian interpreters in institutionalized posts – like NATO – is very scrupulous and demanding.

On the contrary, the employment today of military interpreters in the defense sector of individual states does not follow such a rigid, formal and universal protocol. There is no clear

¹⁴⁸ A form of translating a text aloud while reading the original version.

¹⁴⁹ The information in this section is taken from <http://www.aiic.net/community/print/default.cfm/page291> (consulted in September 2004).

standardization among member states. Each nation acts separately and distinctively.

Some countries select their military interpreters simply *on call-up* according to their mastery of foreign languages; few provide their servicepersons with internal language courses; others train the personnel with special interpretation programs; while others still, do not rely on military linguists at all.

The resulting picture is that of an intermittent, on-demand job. Interpreters are used according to case-to-case needs; in some cases their engagement may be occasional, in others it can be permanent.

If there is something in common for almost all of the states considered in this thesis, regarding the selection of their military interpreters, is the model of reference: the Standardization NATO Agreement (**NATO STANAG 6001**) 'Language Proficiency Standard'.

This agreement defines the linguistic ability of a subject in accordance with 5 proficiency levels:

- Level 0 – No Proficiency;
- Level 1 – Elementary Proficiency;
- Level 2 – Limited Working Proficiency;
- Level 3 – Minimum Professional Proficiency;
- Level 4 – Full Professional Proficiency;
- Level 5 – Native/Bilingual Proficiency.

Each level involves 4 categories of linguistic knowledge:

- Listening
- Speaking
- Reading

- Writing

Hence, the Standardized Language Profile (SLP) will result in a 4-digit number referring to the single categories of linguistic ability (i.e. SLP 3-2-3-2).

Generally, the minimum standard accepted to be admitted to or to continue a language or interpretation/translation course is SLP 3-3-3-3 or 3-2-3-2.

Besides this common measure, the picture is so fragmented and uneven that it is necessary to take into consideration and compare the reality of every single state to have a wider whole outlook.

In the description presented here, it is not conceivable to create a common reference grid to be filled with each country's information on history and current training of military interpreters, for the simple reasons that, first, there is a lack of homogeneity among nations; and second, the nature of confidentiality of most materials and historical documentation on the subject does not allow to conduct a thorough research.

For instance, Canada or the United States possess today the most advanced and competitive military institutes of foreign languages, but they have never had an effective Corps of Interpreters in their history. Belgium set the path for this special unit at the beginning of the century, but the end of World War II determined also the end of this professional office. Italy realized the need to train military interpreters only in 1999, while Iceland does not even have a Ministry of Defense of its own. If Denmark or Germany are proud to show their latest developments in terms of defense linguistic training,

the United Kingdom or Norway declare not to be able to divulgate such information because of its classified nature.

The overall puzzle lacks lots of pieces. Gaps and blanks are just unavoidable. Nevertheless, I tried to collect and put together all available information, state by state, in what I considered to be the most coherent way possible.

In what follows, the 13 NATO member countries that I decided to consider in this analysis are presented in alphabetical order.

5.2 BELGIUM

Belgium opens up this list of countries with a very solid experience in the field of military interpreting.

Alongside with France, Belgium is the pioneer in the creation of a real Corps of Military Interpreters within its national army. As described in Chapter III, the foundation of this Corps dates back to November 30, 1914 on the initiative of the Chief of the British Military Mission at the Belgian General Headquarters. Its existence was officially recognized on November 2, 1917 by a Royal Decree. Its effectives ranged from 150 to 200 servicemen, yet, during the great 1918 offensives, additional 400 interpreters were recruited.

The end of the conflict led to a drastic drop in the number of effectives, and on September 25, 1919, the Belgian Corps of Military Interpreters was disbanded. However, it was reorganized subsequently during World War II.

This special unit of the Belgian army always played primarily a fundamental role of liaison with the allied forces. It had its

heroes, its casualties, its dead. It received honor and glory by the British as well as the Belgian troops.

The services provided were unanimously appreciated by both the military and the civilians, who saw in the interpreters a common bridge over the communication gap.

The Belgian and the foreign press did not fail to praise the courage and abnegation of these men¹⁵⁰.

The end of the Second World War brought about also the disappearance of this profession within the Belgian army.

Today, the organic table of the Belgian Defense does not provide for the interpreter's office, either as a member of the general staff, or as a linguist in Peace Support Operations. This professional figure does not exist anymore in the military field.

In the framework of the linguistic capacity of the Belgian Ministry of Defense, today Belgium can count only on two civil translators – at the DGJM/sp-Trad, the Translation Service – who, on a voluntary basis, perform at times the interpreter's duty. As to the detailed job these translators carry out, it is of confidential nature¹⁵¹.

In 12 years, the Belgian effectives sent abroad in peacekeeping operations have been over 46,000. Yet, no reference to the employment of interpreters – military, civil or local – is available.

From this first experience, we can evince how fickle and inconstant this profession is. It had existed successfully for

¹⁵⁰ For a thorough description of the Corps, see Chapter III, 3.2.

¹⁵¹ Personal information received by Belgian Lieutenant-Colonel V. D'Hoest.

several years in Belgium, and now it is only a commended and glorified memory in the army's archives, without any continuation.

Some people may argue that the functions of this job arise only under a belligerency status, hence they are random and occasional. In peacetime, the need of turning to interpreters is practically unjustified and useless.

This was also the consideration expressed by Henri Van Hoof in his *Theorie et Pratique de l'Interpretation* (p.25), but that observation was written in 1962. Many things have changed since then.

The end of the Cold War, the closer relations among states, the growing process of globalization, technological developments, the exchange of information in real time, the increase of international seminars and meetings, and the appearance of multi-forces peace operations require, more than ever before, continuous contacts with foreign people also in the military field. If the battlefield may not be the only possible scenario for the employment of military interpreters anymore, bilateral or multilateral encounters as well as population assistance in relief missions can easily substitute it today.

The association 'military interpreter – war' is still valid of course, but it is not the only feasible one. As outlined in Chapter IV (4.2), the engagement of military interpreters within the framework of the Defense sector of a country is various also in peacetime.

Unfortunately, Belgium can not support this assertion, yet other nations can.

5.3 CANADA

The origins of interpretation in Canada are really peculiar and unique, mainly due to its bilingual status. It is worth recalling briefly part of the Canadian history.

5.3.1 History

Interpretation dates back to the 16th century, alongside the invasions of the New World by the Europeans.

France is the nation that dominated the explorations of most Canada and that set the first colonies. Its explorers realized immediately the need to rely on interpreters to communicate with the many indigenous tribes spread out on an immense territory.

The first Canadian interpreters were recruited in 1543 by the French explorer Jacques Cartier, who sent two natives to France for 8 months to learn the language and acquire familiarity with French customs and habits¹⁵².

After this precedent, many were the examples that followed. But the linguistic barrier was not the only preoccupation of the French, willing to give life to commercial and political strategies to enhance their fur traffics across the country.

The desire to defend their economic and political rights, and the need to count on trustworthy agents to carry out the

¹⁵² Delisle & Woodsworth, 1995: 259.

mediation job between the fur supplying tribes and the French buyers convinced the latter not to send natives to France anymore, but to do the opposite; young French will eventually be sent to Canadian tribes to learn their language and culture.

This practice gained momentum over the 17th century becoming a consolidated office. The first bilingual dictionaries were written in this period by French interpreters who – on a voluntary basis – adapted themselves completely to the new indigenous lifestyle in order to understand better the culture and the customs of these people.

Most of these men shared everything with the indigenous counterparts: common houses, local fairs, dances, witchcraft celebrations, etc. They wore Indian dresses, took part in various contests and challenges, faced tests of courage and physical strength – the most commended virtues of the Amerinds.

Living with these tribes implied also running tremendous risks, such as imprisonment, torture, or even killing.

They demonstrated passion, abnegation and spirit of adaptation which fostered a feeling of sympathy and friendship among the natives toward the French invaders.

During the entire French regime, in Canada, the interpreter profession became more and more important. Its services were constantly requested by businessmen, administrators, justice officers and the military.

As to this last category, military interpreters were regular soldiers who often occupied a post of command at detached forts.

In 1757, the army of Marquis Montcalm counted more than 1,700 Natives, and relied on 10 interpreters who – in turn – had

to translate orally his speeches. The interpreters also had the duty to inform the Marquis about the Indians' needs and requests.

Among these men, those who are remembered the most for courage and professionalism were: Paul Le Moyne de Maricourt, Joseph Godefroy, François Hertel, and Jean-Paul Legarder¹⁵³.

September 1759 saw the beginning of the British dominance in Canada, which lasted until August 1764.

The new military regime faced immediately the linguistic and cultural problem of governing a foreign land. The British administrators had to turn immediately to translators and interpreters to communicate with a population almost entirely illiterate and speaking only French.

Interpreters informed the natives about the new laws and regulations imposed by the British, helped to negotiate treaties, controlled the functionality of local businesses and ensured the effectiveness of legal structures.

In the military field, they were called to give information regarding strategies and tactics used by the enemy, to discuss treaties, or to carry out diplomatic missions and negotiations for surrender.

The mutual peace conditions negotiated and applied thanks to the presence of interpreters in this period full of insecurities, set the foundations for the current national linguistic and cultural duality, creating deep relationships with the natives who still live in the country today.

¹⁵³ Delisle, 1987: 24-30.

These conditions were also the origins of the new political class of Francophile Canadians, which functioned as fertile soil for the birth of the most prominent translators and interpreters of that time¹⁵⁴.

5.3.2 The current situation

Today, in the framework of the defense sector, military interpreters' training and recruitment fall under the responsibility of the Canadian Military Intelligence Service. The interpreters are mostly recruited from within the Canadian Forces and, in some circumstances, from the private sector. However, due to the nature of their work, information on training, historical background or any material regarding military interpreting is classified and not available to the general public¹⁵⁵.

Even though the Defense sector does not provide any practical training for interpreters, it offers the possibility to its servicepersons to attend well-established and experienced Military Language Schools, to acquire an adequate language mastery – mainly in both English and French – necessary to carry out the various military tasks we analyzed previously.

The Canadian Forces Language Schools (CFLSs)

¹⁵⁴ Dumas, 2002 (Cd-rom).

¹⁵⁵ Personal information received by Paul Villeneuve, Public Inquiries Officer of the Canadian National Defense.

For 50 years, the Canadian Forces Language Schools have been providing language training for military personnel across Canada and abroad, adapting their services in response to the changing needs of the Canadian Forces.

Language training within the Canadian Armed Forces has evolved substantially during this period from the teaching of English and French as a second language to over twenty foreign languages.

These Schools are now offering English and French training to Canada's Partners for Peace nations¹⁵⁶. They include such countries as Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Poland, Romania, the Slovak Republic, Ukraine and many others.

In order to meet a growing demand, the Canadian Forces has established a Canadian Forces Language School which unites its three major language schools – Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, the National Capital Region and Borden – under one command.

In September 1998, as a result of a requirement to standardize operations and regroup functions, a Language Training Working Group was tasked to create a Language Training Faculty which would re-group all Canadian Training System schools and detachments with language training responsibilities. This Language Training Faculty would include:

¹⁵⁶ Partnership for Peace (PFP) is a program established in 1994 to strengthen relations between the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Source: "Microsoft® Encarta® Encyclopedia 2001. © 1993-2000 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.

- a. L'École des Langues des Forces Canadienne Saint Jean together with its Chief of Curriculum and Chief of Testing resources; and
- b. Canadian Forces Language School Ottawa together with Canadian Forces Language School (Ottawa) detachment Borden.

By April 1999, the task was completed. Today, the Canadian Forces Language School (CFLS) Headquarters is located at the Asticou Center in Hull, Québec across the Ottawa River from Canada's national capital, Ottawa. A Lieutenant-colonel is the Commanding Officer and he is assisted by a staff of seven including a Major as Deputy Commanding Officer.

Three schools encompassing one Company and two Detachments fall under the command of the Commanding Officer. With a total of 199 civilians (teachers and administrative staff) and 30 military members, CFLS now provides approximately 70% of all language training requirements provided within the Canadian Forces.

CFLS is responsible for:

- providing French and English Second Language and Foreign Language training to members of the Department of National Defense (DND);
- providing French and English Second Language as a Foreign Language and teacher training to members of Partners for Peace countries (MTAP Program);
- establishing and maintaining language-training standards for the Canadian Forces (CF);
- designing and managing French and English curricula and testing;

- procuring or developing and managing foreign language course curricula and testing for the CF and DND;
- drafting training standards;
- carrying out staff assistance visits to ensure training standards are followed;
- testing services to respond to two Language Standards currently in use: Public Service Commission (PSC), NATO STANAG – for MTAP – and International Language Roundtable for foreign languages;
- providing program and course evaluation;
- coordinating tests for PSC;
- providing statistical analysis;
- carrying out research and development; and
- acting as Canada’s representation at the Bureau for International Language Coordination (BILC) conference/seminar.

A thorough description of the history, training, learning environment, and language courses provided by the three institutes forming the CFLS is reported in Appendix 10¹⁵⁷.

5.4 DENMARK

Denmark started to train military interpreters in 1957, during the Cold War and under the Geneva Prisoners of War Conventions.

¹⁵⁷ The information in this section is taken from the CFLS’ website: http://www.cfls-elfc.forces.gc.ca/english/index_e.htm (consulted in September 2004), as well as received privately from the Public Inquires Officer of the Canadian National Defense.

That year saw the establishment of the Institute of Foreign Languages at the Royal Danish Defense College, in which officers started to be trained as interpreters/military linguists. The first language to be taught in the school was Russian, followed by Polish and more recently by Arabic.

The Institute has functioned ever since, adapting programs, languages, courses and training to the changing conditions of the world order, the growing participation of Denmark in Peace Support Operations and UN peacekeeping activities, and the Royal Army's needs.

It operates in accordance with NATO STANAG 6001 Language Proficiency Standards and with NATO classification system. The latter prohibits any form of divulgation of materials regarding school programs and contents, which remain inaccessible to the general public¹⁵⁸, hence, the following information is partial and in some cases incomplete.

5.4.1 *Institut for Sprog (ISP)*¹⁵⁹

The *Forsvarsakademiet* (Royal Danish Defense College) is responsible for three different institutes: the Institute of Foreign Languages (ISP), the Army Higher School, and the Special Training Institute.

¹⁵⁸ Personal information received privately from Lieutenant-Colonel Steen Bornholdt Andersen (Institute of Foreign Languages).

¹⁵⁹ Institute of Foreign Languages. The information in this section is taken from the handbook: *Skole i 50 år. FRA HEMMELIG TIL INTERNATIONAL* (2004).

History

The *Forsvarsakademiet* was established in April 1954; ever since, it has cooperated with the Danish Ministry of Defense, as well as the Warsaw Pact's and Partnership for Peace'¹⁶⁰ nations.

In 1957 – during the Cold War period – the Academy gave life to the Institute of Foreign Languages, or ‘Spy School’ as it was generally called, which had the task to train military as well as civilian linguists in the Russian military lexicon. The courses, which lasted one year, were taught by Army colonels and lieutenants, experts in espionage and military strategies, and brought into being officially the profession of ‘military interpreter’ in Denmark.

Since its creation, the ISP has based its teaching and training on the model of the US Army Language School¹⁶¹. According to this model of schooling, classes were divided into: military training, linguistic training, and general military and civilian knowledge of one specific country's culture. Classes were organized on a weekly basis with 4 lessons per day – which included listening, writing, speaking and correcting exercises – plus an extra lesson entirely dedicated to the reading of civilian and military texts.

In the mid 60s, the Institute set up the first linguistic laboratory; in the 80s the lab was substituted by a more modern one provided with a television set for each position able to receive satellite programs in several languages.

¹⁶⁰ Ibidem note 12.

¹⁶¹ Today, Defense Language Institute of Monterey. See section 5.12.

Today, the Institute possesses a multimedia laboratory with computers and internet access.

According to the changes in the world order and the increasing military demand of linguists in languages other than Russian, new languages were introduced in the School: Polish in 1972, Serb-Croatian in 1990 and Arabic in 1993.

Selection and training

In order to be suitable to attend the Language Institute, – which has a selective entry of 15 students per language – candidates must undergo a strict selection based on the following prerequisites:

- Having excellent knowledge of the Danish language and good mastery of one foreign language;
- Having good basic knowledge of the subjects taught in the school;
- Having good physical conditions;
- Passing the admission test;
- Pledging allegiance to the Danish Army at the end of the studies and signing a contract which states that the student will be employed in *Den Danske Internationale Brigade* (the Danish International Brigade) as military interpreter for a period of up to 7 uninterrupted months.

The admission test consists in a physical test, several written tests and an interview with the psychologists.

The current ‘main’ language courses provided by the Institute are Russian, Polish and Arabic. They last 16 months and are structured in two parts:

1) Basic language lessons (syllabus of 10 months with 1400 hours of language lessons and 125 lecturer’s teaching hours) consisting of:

- Introduction to the sounds of the alphabet (about 3 weeks);
- Basic language course with a final test for the promotion to the rank of sergeant (about 4 months);
- Intermediate language course integrated with notions of history, geography, economics, and religion, with a month-long stay abroad to perfect the language studied and a final exam (about 5 months).

2) Military interpreting training (syllabus of 6 months with 400 hours of language lessons and 95 hours of culture and specific terminology) consisting of:

- Military tactics and organization;
- Commanding system of battalions and units;
- “Human intelligence” and interrogation;
- Military terminology (Danish – Russian/Polish/Arabic);
- Military terminology (Russian/Polish/Arabic – Danish);
- Interpretation.

After this second part, students who pass the final exam are promoted to the rank of lieutenant reservist.

Throughout the years, the Language Institute has established ‘secondary’ language courses to integrate the cultural and linguistic background of its students, such as Serb-Croatian, Albanian, and Arabic variants/dialects (like that spoken in

Iraq). Courses of more ‘common’ western languages – Italian, Spanish, French, Portuguese, and German – as well as Japanese and Persian are provided by the Danish Ministry of Defense. The Danish Ministry of Defense provides also for regular refresher courses.

Military interpreters’ employment at the national level and in Peace Support Operations

The Danish linguistic officers graduated at the ISP may be called to carry out the following tasks:

- Interpreting services by different ministries;
- Interpreting services during high-level meetings between military chiefs and official visits;
- Interpreting services during international sport events;
- Interpreting for other national institutions, i.e. Police;
- Teaching languages at any level within Denmark;
- Training soldiers who will take part in Danish NATO and UN missions;
- Translating/interpreting for the Danish Ministry of Defense;
- Cooperating with the Danish Embassy in Moscow.

Since 1991 then, – year in which military missions in the Balkans started – 50% of the Danish military linguists graduated at the ISP have been employed in long-term operations in those areas (KFOR and SFOR missions), while almost 100% of them have taken part in short/middle-term missions in other parts of the world, especially in Russia where Denmark has continued to play a fundamental role in the inspection of the former soviet republics.

The Danish interpreters of Arabic have taken part in several international missions in Lebanon, West Bank West Sahara, Afghanistan, and Iraq.

Today, Danish military interpreters are employed mainly in Peace Support Operations (PSOs) in Kosovo, Kabul and Iraq. In these areas, the military may be substituted as well by civilian or local interpreters.

5.5 FRANCE

In Chapter II, we saw how France was the first western nation to institutionalize the diplomatic/military interpreter profession with the creation of special schools for *dragomans* in Constantinople and Smyrna already at the end of the 17th century.

The tradition to constantly train military interpreters in specialized institutes has continued throughout the years reaching a high level of professionalism and the creation of a standing *Corps of Military Interpreters* within the French Armed Forces.

5.5.1 History

Despite the pioneering Belgian experience (Chapter III, 3.2) in recruiting and training military interpreters in wartime, it is necessary to assert that France had already possessed a professional Corps of Interpreters since 1830, in the light of the African military campaigns and the conquest of Algeria. Yet, already in 1792 – on the wake of the French Revolution – each French army had a similar linguistic unit which, during military campaigns, had the duty to assist the local population.

In 1887, the French Army decided to establish a new Corps of Military Interpreters Reservists which exceeded in numbers abundantly the corps of interpreters who followed a traditional career¹⁶².

During the two main wars, the French Army Corps of Military Interpreters carried out an excellent liaison job with the British Army and could count on more than 2,500 officers and liaison agents.

On May 30, 1944, the French Air Forces General Staff decided to create a similar corps among its troops, and set up – with a decree – the general provisions for recruitment, admission, career, employment and administration of the new linguistic personnel.

Initially, this military unit was established to serve only in wartime, but with the military occupation in Germany and in Austria, as well as the presence of allied institutions on French territory – especially in North Africa – at the end of World War II, the French Air General Staff decided to extend the duration of this service for another 9 months, training the new generations of soldiers in private language schools.

¹⁶² Van Hoof, 1962: 25-26.

To this respect, it is worth noting that France was the only nation to include military female personnel in its original Corps of Interpreters. A provision dated January 25, 1945, provided for all the articles regarding their recruitment and employment¹⁶³.

The servicemen and women selected for this profession that passed a language ability test in one or more languages, received an official certificate stating their qualification as INTERPRETER, and could be employed in the different posts provided by the Central Administration.

In October 1948, the French Ministry of Defense ordered the training of technical interpreters within the Air Force. The frequent use and handling of British and American materials or technical manuals, in fact, required specialized linguists who were requested to assist the different services of the unit, such as: testing centers, airplane repairing centers, materials storage section, material transit section, and installed bases.

In January 1949, the first course tailored to Non-commissioned Officers (NCOs) Mechanical Technical Interpreters was established in Versailles. The recruitment was carried out on a voluntary basis among mechanical personnel with sufficient general knowledge. The training was conducted by Senior Officers.

In the framework of this training, many of these students were sent to several Air Force Schools in the USA to learn English

¹⁶³ Personal information received from General Roland Bourdonnec (Chief of the Historical Service of the French Air Forces).

and to acquire a solid bilingual vocabulary of technical and military terms¹⁶⁴.

Unfortunately, this rich and interesting history on military interpreting (during African campaigns, and World War I and II) is extremely confidential and classified. The little information available to the general public was given to me privately by the French Army and Air Force General Staffs (*Etat-Major, Armée de Terre* and *Armée de l’Air*).

Today, France maintains a standing Corps of Military Interpreters also in peacetime. Its training falls under the responsibility of the Military Training and Language School of Strasbourg.

5.5.2 *École Interarmées du Renseignement et des Études Linguistiques de Strasbourg (EIREL)*¹⁶⁵

The Military Training and Language School of Strasbourg (EIREL) was established in September 1985, during the Cold War. It is a complex Institute which groups together the following centers:

¹⁶⁴ Personal information received from General Roland Bourdonnec (Chief of the Historical Service of the French Air Forces).

¹⁶⁵ The Military Training and Language School of Strasbourg.

- CFIR – *Centre de Formation Interarmées du Renseignement*¹⁶⁶;
- CLEEM – *Centre de Langues et d'Études Militaires Étrangères*¹⁶⁷;
- CIRIP – *Centre d'Instruction du Renseignement et d'Interprétation*¹⁶⁸;
- CEAGN – *Centre d'Enseignement de l'Allemand de la Gendarmerie Nationale*¹⁶⁹;
- CPAA – *Centre Pédagogique de l'Armée de l'Air*¹⁷⁰;

This School aims at giving the French Defense personnel – Army, Navy and Air Force – a comprehensive training primarily in two interlinked strategic disciplines: military information and foreign languages.

The flexibility of the School allows the combination of different qualifications; an expert in information, for example, can become a linguist in Russian, Arabic, German or English – the basic languages taught in the School – and vice versa.

Since 1994, the EIREL has been under the responsibility of the Military Information Division (DRM – *Direction du Renseignement Militaire*). Its infrastructure allows the organization of 150 training courses whose duration ranges from few days to two years, attended by about 170 students per day – mostly generals and captains¹⁷¹.

¹⁶⁶ International Center of Military Training on Information.

¹⁶⁷ Military Center of Foreign Languages and Studies.

¹⁶⁸ Training, Information and Interpretation Center.

¹⁶⁹ Center for German Studies of the National Gendarmerie.

¹⁷⁰ Pedagogic Air Force Center.

¹⁷¹ Information taken from: “La culture du *renseignement*. L'École Interarmées du Renseignement et des Études Linguistiques de Strasbourg” (1995).

The basic training in information, logistics, and technical/administrative disciplines is carried out by career officers or reservists – mostly captains – while the Language Division is managed by qualified civil instructors on contract employment.

The Language Division organizes its training courses in the light of specific operative engagements and current needs, i.e. English mastery for UN Observers; German knowledge for the personnel assigned to the European Corps or to the French garrisons in Germany; Serb-Croatian for military in PSOs in those areas, etc., adapting infrastructures and resources to the requests of the military field.

The School provides 28 classrooms, 9 linguistic laboratories, and 3 special classrooms for teaching with a coordinator, multimedia and audio-visual materials in 17 languages, up-to-date didactical supports as CD-ROMs, audio and videocassettes, books and exercise books.

All these knowledge resources are used to respond to the growing demand of professional training in information and languages due primarily to the recent transformations of the world order, the increasing participation of France in PSOs, and the necessity to enhance the competence level of the military capability¹⁷².

5.5.3 The National Association of Liaison Officers and Reservist Interpreters

¹⁷² Léaustic, 97: 24-26.

Today, France possesses a **National Association of Liaison Officers and Reservist Interpreters** (Association Nationale des Officiers de Liaison et des Interprètes de Réserve – ANOLIR) covering about 30 different languages, from English to Chinese, from German to Japanese, from Arabic to Serb-Croatian, etc.

It is made up of 300 military reservists – some of whom are bilingual – who have received a higher education training at the Military Training and Language School of Strasbourg. They are selected according to their qualification, the result of an interview, and their service records.

In peacetime, anytime a civil or military authority requires the services of a military interpreter to the Information and International Relations Office in Paris, one of the Association's members gets immediately ready to carry out these services which may include tasks such as: accompanying a French delegation abroad, welcoming a foreign officer on an official visit to France, or taking part in round tables that may last a day or an entire week.

In wartime instead, the main tasks of military interpreters are those of interrogating war prisoners, bridging the communication gap between allied forces, and translating any relevant documentation¹⁷³.

5.6 GERMANY

¹⁷³ Tenoux, 1993: 9-10.

After France and Belgium, Germany is the third country – from a chronological point of view – to establish a Corps of Military Interpreters.

The *Dolmetscherkompanien* (Corps of Interpreters) make their appearance during World War II. Within these Corps, many private soldiers were raised to the rank of officers and non-commissioned officers (NCOs).

To this respect it is right and proper to say that Germany already trained Military Interpreters at the beginning of the 20th century, but the little literature on the subject is classified for the general public. The only documentation I was able to discover consists of two practical handbooks printed in Berlin in 1905 and 1906 respectively, entitled *Der Offizier als englischer Dolmetscher* and *L'interprète militaire. Zum Gebrauch in Feindland. Zum Selbstunterricht*. They are simply exercise books containing several short texts on military matters that interpreters had to translate from German into French/English or vice versa.

5.6.1 History

The *Dolmetscherkompanien* were special liaison units established in 1940, at the saber-rattling of World War II. They were made up of professional military interpreters who had received interpreting training at either the Heidelberg or Leipzig Schools for Interpreters.

As identification sign, all interpreters were requested to wear a special uniform as well as a 7 cm-broad pink armband with the black word *Wehrmachtsdolmetscher* (Military Interpreter) impressed on it. Each interpreter possessed also a recognizable red identity card.

Military interpreters (*Dolmetscher*) during this period of time represented one of the three linguistic categories of the German Armed Forces. They were requested to possess an excellent written as well as oral mastery of foreign languages, good general knowledge, judiciousness and tact.

The other two categories were: translators (*Übersetzer*), who had to deal exclusively with written documentation, and were recognizable by a yellow identity card, and polyglots (*Sprachkundige*), middlemen with a sufficient level of language knowledge to be able to convey easier messages and basic conversations, and recognizable by a green identity card.

The three offices fell under the general name “Sprachmittler” (linguistic mediators) and covered various positions:

- within the Army General Staff;
- in the Army Administration;
- on the field, along with the troops.

All military mediators were divided by languages according to the following pattern:

Main languages: Danish, English, French, Dutch, Flemish, Italian, Norwegian, Polish, Russian and Swedish.

10 military mediators for each language.

Secondary languages: Bulgarian, Finnish, Greek, Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Portuguese, Romanian, Slovakian, Spanish, Serb-Croatian, Czech, Ukrainian, Hungarian, Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Kiswahili and Turkish.

3 to 5 military mediators for each language.

During the war, many military interpreter continued to expand and practice their linguistic skills through self-study using existing exercise books¹⁷⁴ and interpreting manuals. They also met in small groups, according to their linguistic combinations, to study, to simulate real job situations, or to repeat the lessons learnt previously.

Unfortunately, the information regarding the German *Dolmetscherkompanien* is fragmented and incomplete. The facts reported above constitute the only available materials I was able to receive privately from the German Federal Army's archive¹⁷⁵.

5.6.2 The *Bundessprachenamt*¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁴ As seen at the beginning of the section 5.6.

¹⁷⁵ BUNDESARCHIV – Zentralnachweisstelle Kornelimünster – *Sammlung wehrrechtlicher Gutachten und Vorschriften*. Gesamt – Sachregister. Heft 3, 8.

¹⁷⁶ The information in the following section was received privately from the *Bundessprachenamt* and was in part taken from its website: [Hhttp://www.bundessprachenamt.de](http://www.bundessprachenamt.de)H (consulted in September 2004).

The *Bundessprachenamt* (Federal Office of Languages), represents today the Language Service of the German Federal Ministry of Defense.

Established in 1969, the *Bundessprachenamt* became the institution which united under a common name the German Military Translation Service and the German Military Language School.

It operates in accordance with NATO STANAG 6001 Language Proficiency Standard to provide the national Armed Forces with highly qualified linguistic personnel.

The Language Service in the Federal Ministry of Defense's area of responsibility is divided into the **Ministerial Language Service** and the **Language Service of the Bundeswehr** (Army, Air Force and Navy).

Apart from an administrative element, the Ministerial Language Service is made up exclusively of civil conference interpreters, while the Language Service of the Bundeswehr comprises language training and translation services carried out both by civil and military personnel.

The Translation Service of the Bundeswehr employs, in addition to the approximately 80 linguists at the Federal Office of Languages, a further 400 linguists in about 80 agencies in Germany as well as in a few other European countries and in the USA.

Under the term linguist, it is understood: conference interpreters, linguistic editors, translators, terminologists, and foreign language secretaries.

In terms of demand, the most important languages covered by the Translation Service are English, French and Russian, but the Service also employs translators for Italian, Spanish, Dutch, Portuguese, Greek, Norwegian, Danish, Swedish, Polish, Czech, and Serb-Croatian.

The demand for individual languages fluctuates as the political environment changes and the tasks of the Bundeswehr are revised. Some translators/interpreters work exclusively from a foreign language into German, but more and more work is now being done from German into foreign languages because of the growing demand.

The Service employs non-German personnel as well. To be employed by the Translation Service, Germans and non-Germans alike must not only pass an aptitude test, but also be prepared to undergo a security check by the Military Counterintelligence Service.

Throughout their years of service, all linguists have the opportunity to attend extension training courses of relevance to and necessary for their work. The purpose of such follow-on training is to allow linguists to improve their specialized knowledge and further their career.

Contacts with the military side of the Bundeswehr are maintained through the translation orders. These orders come largely from the Bundeswehr, through interpreting duties, e.g. for soldiers on exercise, and – introduced only recently – through translation and interpretation duties in the context of missions abroad. For the latter, at present, a military status is required, i.e. linguists who take part in such a mission – on a

voluntary basis – must be enrolled in the Bundeswehr for the duration of such mission.

5.6.3 Training

As far as the training for interpreters and translators is concerned, the *Bundesspachenamt* focuses on providing all translation service personnel – translators, revisers, interpreters and terminologists – with the specialized knowledge they need for their daily tasks and on keeping them up-to-date with developments in defense policy in general and within the Bundeswehr in particular.

Training is a continuous process designed to maintain the highest standards in the language services provided and it is regulated by a clearly defined concept.

Training begins with introductory training which is divided into three categories:

- general;
- technical; and
- assignment-specific.

This introductory training conveys the basic knowledge and skills – over and above a university level qualifying aptitude test – that are required for training service personnel in the course of their duties.

General introductory training encompasses a number of courses, such as an orientation course for newly recruited staff

which takes a general look at the most important aspects of the military environment, a general overview of military tactics, the navy and the air force, and also an introduction to the legal and administrative principles underlying the German civil service, particularly in the context of the Bundeswehr.

Technical introductory training familiarizes translation service personnel with the technical side of the Bundeswehr and is made up of introductory courses on specialized subjects, such as national protection and environmental protection of the Bundeswehr, logistics and military intelligence. It also provides an introduction to translation-related techniques, such as computer-aided translation and terminology management and use as applied in the translation service.

Assignment-specific introductory training, as the name suggests, introduces translation service personnel to very specific skills that are required for the particular assignment. One such example is the evaluation of language tests for military personnel, a process for which the assistance of translation is sometimes enlisted. To prepare them for this task, they are required to attend a special course.

Introductory training is followed by – and sometimes runs parallel to – technical training which is designed to ensure and continuously enhance the quality of the language services provided. Technical training takes the form of general and assignment-specific technical training.

General technical training measures include advanced seminars on subjects such as computer-aided translation and terminology management and use.

Assignment-specific technical training gives translation service personnel the opportunity to deepen their knowledge in subject areas directly related to their assignment. Specialized courses are offered by the *Bundesakademie für Wehrverwaltung und Wehrtechnik* (a broad range of courses in defense technology and administration) and the *Sanitätsakademie der Bundeswehr* (medical specialties and medical service-related subjects).

Foreign languages seminars may also be attended and exchanges are organized with corresponding institutions or facilities of allied armed forces.

Since the translation service operates a translator/reviser system, assignment-specific technical training also includes a ten-week course for translators wishing to qualify as a reviser¹⁷⁷.

Finally, technical leadership training is made available to selected translation service personnel who are deemed suitable for a future executive position. Such training includes a three-month assignment with the Translation Service Policy Section which offers an insight into the development and implementation of policies and concepts for the translation service as well as technical supervision and personnel-related measures. Similarly, a three-month assignment is also available to selected personnel at the Policy/Technical Supervision

¹⁷⁷ In the translation field, with the term ‘reviser’ it is generally understood a person whose main task is to look over again a written document (i.e. a translation) in order to correct it, amend it, or improve it before editing its final version.

Department of the Language Section in the Federal Ministry of Defense¹⁷⁸.

5.7 ITALY

In comparison to states like Germany, France or Belgium, which have a long and colorful history of military interpreting, Italy can be considered a novice in this discipline since it had never had military interpreters within its army until a few years ago.

The need to turn to interpreters in the military field started to develop in Italy as a natural consequence of the increasing number of Armed Forces' engagements in the international scenario of the last few years.

The several PSOs in which the Italian army has been involved – the Balkans at the beginning, Central Asia then, to end with Afghanistan and Iraq – have presented and materialized effectively the interface problem between different armies.

The need to have at its disposal military personnel able to communicate fluently with foreign counterparts led to the Italian Army's decision to train military personnel as interpreters and translators. That decision was put into practice in November of 1999.

¹⁷⁸ Personal information received from Officer Stumpf (*Bundessprachenamt*).

Before this decision was taken, Italy did not provide its army with professional interpreters, yet it offered the possibility to its military to learn foreign languages in the Military School of Foreign Languages, established in 1963.

5.7.1 *Scuola di Lingue Estere dell'Esercito*¹⁷⁹ (SLEE)

The Italian Military School of Foreign Languages was created on August 18, 1963, at the request of the Italian Army General Staff to train military personnel coming from all forces: Army, Navy, Air Force and, more recently, 'Carabinieri'.

In 1993, the school was moved from its original city, Rome, to Perugia, where it is based today.

The School selects its candidates according to specific criteria and strict prerequisites. The general criteria require:

- priority to Officers, Marshals and NCOs destined to work in missions abroad;
- consideration of candidates' moral firmness, technical-professional profile, employment sector;
- availability to work in International Organizations;
- 'excellent' or 'above average' disciplinary and service records;
- no attendance to the same courses in the previous three years;
- no participation in other courses – more than 30-day long – during the entire duration of the language training;
- accomplishment of all command obligations provided for each rank.

¹⁷⁹ The Italian Military School of Foreign Languages.

To be admitted to the courses, candidates must also:

- have a language proficiency – certificated in the last 3 years – not superior or equal to SLP 2-1-2-1 (for self-study courses);
- have a language proficiency – certificated in the last 3 years – superior or equal to SLP 2-1-2-1, and not superior to SLP 3-2-3-2 (for crash courses);
- have a language proficiency – certificated in the last year – superior or equal to SLP 3-2-3-2 (for refresher courses).

The SLEE works in accordance with NATO Standard Language Agreement (STANAG 6001) to clearly identify the performance targets that its students must achieve and can plan their training accordingly. It is also provided with the most efficient didactical methodology using advanced hardware and software infrastructures as supports to the mother-tongue teachers' activities and students' learning.

All students can make full use of didactical materials supplied by the School and can rely on tutors for any difficulty.

The SLEE has, since its foundation, offered different activities and teaching methods to satisfy linguistically the diversified needs of all Armed Forces.

The language/cultural activities provided by the school are the following:

- Internal courses (routine activity within the institute).
 - Intensive courses;
 - Refresher courses;
 - Rare languages courses;

- ISSMI courses (*Corso Superiore Stato Maggiore Interforze*)¹⁸⁰;
 - Crash courses (quick and intensive).
- Remote courses (in other venues).
- Temporary practical training in Great Britain, Ireland, France, Portugal, Spain and Germany;
 - COPAD course (*Corso di Perfezionamento di Lingue a Distanza*)¹⁸¹;
 - COPAD-ISSMI course (preparatory training for the Higher Course of General Staff Interforces);
 - Preparatory courses for interpreters.

A thorough description of all the above mentioned courses offered by the School since its foundation is reported in Appendix 11¹⁸².

The **Preparatory English courses for interpreters** are a novelty within the SLEE. They were organized for the first time in 1999 on the wake of the Italian Army's decision to start training military interpreters.

These courses aim at selecting and giving the students the prerequisites necessary to attend subsequently the intensive interpretation courses held at the *S.Pio V* University of Rome.

The duration of the courses is 26 weeks.

¹⁸⁰ Higher Course for General Staff Interforces.

¹⁸¹ Remote Course for Language Perfecting.

¹⁸² The information in this section is taken from the SLEE's website: http://www.esercito.difesa.it/slee/c_ammissione.htm (consulted in September 2004).

The minimum English level required to proceed with the interpreting training is LPS 3-3-3-3 (for Sergeants and Volunteers on permanent service) and LPS 4-4-3-3 (for Officers and NCOs).

5.7.2 Military interpreters' training

As previously said, in 1999, the Italian Army decided to launch the first course for Military Interpreters, or *Military Mediators assigned to Peacekeeping Operations*, as it was initially called. The main reason for giving life to this new professional service within the Army was that of filling a linguistic gap that had always existed. The lack of a linguistic reference point for Operations Commanders in communicating with foreign forces or local population was unsustainable in a more and more globalized and interdependent military environment:

“[...] Scopo dei mediatori militari è quello di costituire punto di riferimento per i Comandanti in operazioni, in qualità di consulenti linguistici, per la redazione di documentazione scritta e per le comunicazioni con forze straniere e con la popolazione locale [...]”¹⁸³

The first course experience

¹⁸³ In Cappelli, 2004: 1-11. “[...] Military mediators must represent a linguistic reference point for Operations Commanders in dealing with the editing of written documents, as well as with the communications with foreign forces and local population [...]”. Translation by Roberta Fontana.

The first course – that paved the way for the following ones – was unique in that it was taught by civilian interpreters, and participants were in a position of breaking new ground, without a reference group of peers. Part of the course necessarily consisted in consciousness-raising, i.e. introducing participants to interpreting, but the course’s foundation rested upon the participants’ construction of workable ethics within a military context. The course’s primary aim, then, was to create an environment which favored the development of ethical expertise (Monacelli, 2000: 181).

The select group of military career personnel who took part in the first interpreter training course (11 servicemen) had never undergone translator or interpreter training and the average age of participants was 33 years. Four were enrolled in university programs and for the most part all had received specialized technical training (mechanical engineering, telecommunications, aeronautics), either through military academy or during previous formal schooling. The common denominator was their English proficiency level, a course prerequisite.

Military personnel participating in the interpreter training course were required to have an SLP 3-3-4-4, which means a level ‘3’ in oral language skills, i.e. listening and speaking. The following table lists salient features from the NATO standard language agreement profile descriptors for these two skills.

The categories listed in the first column (proficiency) concern the contexts in which language skills are tested and the required standards. It is interesting to note certain requirements that are not normally taken into consideration, such as the ability to ‘overhear conversations’ (listening) and to both convey

‘affective intent without rephrasing’ and avoid ‘groping for words’ (speaking) (Monacelli, 2000: 185-186).

NATO SLP 3-3 (listening –speaking) proficiency profile¹⁸⁴

Proficiency	Listening
<i>Contexts</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - face-to-face/telephone - radio/TV/video - overhearing conversations - lectures/oral briefings
<i>Standards</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - medium density of texts - limited amounts of interference - regional expressions and pronunciation
interference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - occasional difficulty overhearing - identifies gist of all texts - comprehends most key details - occasionally requests repetition - may miss details in presence of - occasionally requests clarification from native speakers on content of texts conveyed via disembodied media

Proficiency

<i>Contexts</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - face-to-face - telephone/telephone - transactions/social conversations
-----------------	--

Speaking

¹⁸⁴ Scheme taken from: Monacelli, 2000: 185-186.

Standards
rephrasing

- oral briefings/presentations
- affective intent conveyed without
- fluency may be impaired by hesitation without groping for words
- complex structure used with occasional errors
- recognizably foreign pronunciation should not interfere with intelligibility
- language is socially acceptable and contextually appropriate in most situations
- circumlocution may be used to maintain flow of speech
- language is socially acceptable and appropriate in most situations

Course curriculum

The above mentioned course aimed at preparing military personnel for face-to-face interpreter-mediated encounters within the context of future PSOs. Yet, there had been no prior survey concerning market needs, nor were professors in a position to convey first-hand experience, all being civilian interpreters. The Army was responding to contingent problems by commissioning such a course, although the nature of the mediation was never specifically defined. The responsibility for course content and development thus laid squarely with the professional interpreters/professors involved.

The course – officially designated as a course for ‘cultural mediators’ – lasted one academic year, from November 1999 to July 2000, including an exam session.

The curriculum was planned in accordance with input by course teachers, which included professors of Interpreting (English/Italian), English linguistics, and Serb-Croatian language.

Course participants were expected to attend 4 hours of lesson a day, four days a week: they studied Serb two days a week (200 hrs.), Interpreting one day (100 hrs.) and English Linguistics one day (100 hrs.)

After a period of four months, course professors decided to alter the curriculum and separate the two course languages (English and Serb-Croatian). Interpreting training thus continued, along with the English Linguistics course, for a period of three more months. A new timetable was established after the change to allow for independent study, since participants began taking more responsibility for their own learning. This meant attending three days of lessons instead of four. The last two months were then dedicated entirely to learning the Serb-Croatian language.

Participants’ comprehension skills were tested using a variety of means: audio recordings, TV videotapes and computer video sound sources reproducing speakers of English with varied accents where the text density, sound quality and levels of interference also varied.

In terms of oral production and their ability to engage in a two-way interaction, participants were requested to respond to

textual clues and cloze tests, and to take particular turns in a dialogical exchange (Monacelli, 2000: 187-188).

Interpreting syllabus

The varied nature of PSOs pitches the discourse on a line from less ‘formal’ events (humanitarian aid) to more ‘formal’ events (support of political leadership) as illustrated in the following table.

The contextual configurations of the two extremes overlap to some degree, e.g. it is conceivable that the discourse of supporting political leadership also include a hidden agenda, or that distributing humanitarian aid involve manipulative discourse. Roles are described in terms of military interpreters at the service of other military officers. Thus relationships depend to a great extent on the social status of participants, i.e. whether they are civilians or servicemen, the latter notably positioned in a well-established, hierarchical order. The probability of performing in more formal settings, along with the participants’ weaknesses in interaction expertise, led to an interpreter-training syllabus designed as three, overlapping modules, each covered by a different interpreting professor:

1. memory skills and acquisition of a personalized note-taking technique (for consecutive interpreting);
2. consecutive interpreting form stretches of discourses (about 3 min.);
3. terminology management and mediated face-to-face communication.

The discourse of PSOs¹⁸⁵

Contextual configuration	Less 'formal events'
FIELD	Personal contact with aid recipient aiming at alleviating strife, creating goodwill and increased security for unit
MODE	Use of two or more languages; Spoken extempore phrases: commands, concern, compassion, hidden agenda
TENOR	Roles: based on military ranks; Social status: civil and military; Commander: military; Aid recipient: civilian; Interpreter: military

Contextual configuration	More 'formal events'
FIELD	Public interaction aiming at strengthening political leadership through the support of emerging leaders
MODE	Use of two or more languages; spoken extempore or prepared speeches, notes as aide-mémoire: diplomatic, persuasive, manipulative
TENOR	Roles: based on military rank; Social status: civil and military; Speaker: military; Listener: military and civilian;

¹⁸⁵ Scheme taken from: Monacelli, 2000: 189.

Interpreter: military

Since 1999, the course has been held regularly every year.

At present, only few of the servicemen trained during these years have performed constantly in interpreting assignments within the military field – in PSOs in Bosnia, Kosovo, Albania, Afghanistan, or mainly as translators in the framework of the Italian Army General Staff. Most of the servicemen, instead, do not carry out interpreting tasks, but continue to perform their duty according to their rank and their unit's military needs.

5.7.3 Civil interpreters

It is true that Italy had never provided its troops engaged in PSOs with professional interpreters before 1999, yet its late awakening to train military interpreters does not mean the total absence of interpreters at the institutional level – Defense and Army General Staff, Ministry of Defense.

The Italian Defense sector has always relied on a small group of civil interpreters/translators as reference point for linguistic counseling.

In comparison with the new military interpreter's profile, the existing In-house Interpreter is selected on the basis of a public competition.

Candidates come from varying educational backgrounds: three-year training institutes, a university degree in translation and/or

interpretation, university degree in literature and foreign languages.

They access their future career with the Ministry of Defense via a national exam that generally comprises a translation into at least two foreign languages. Suitable candidates are then invited to an oral exam consisting of a conversation in the languages of their choice.

Once hired, their official profile is defined according to specific internal needs. The ‘Linguistic Sector’ involves the following profiles:

- Linguistic Assistant;
- Translator/interpreter;
- Translator/interpreter Reviser;
- Translator/interpreter Coordinator.

Duties may range from the translation of various documentation¹⁸⁶ to interpreting assignments for investigations, trials and immigration.

Those specifically trained (and willing) offer their simultaneous interpreting services for international conferences organized by the Ministry.

These in-house translators/interpreters are promoted from within.

All interpreters at present are undergoing retraining for ‘requalification’ to be promoted to a higher pay scale level. The Ministry may then announce a competition to fill the vacancies for specific language combinations according to the needs¹⁸⁷.

¹⁸⁶ As described in details in Chapter IV, 4.2.2.

¹⁸⁷ Personal communication.

5.8 LUXEMBOURG

Unfortunately, Luxembourg's history of military interpreters can be summed up literally in four words: it does not exist.

The Luxembourg's army does not have, and never had, military interpreters among its ranks.

This is due primarily to two reasons:

- 1) on account of size, geographical position and historical strategic alliances, Luxembourg has always worked in close cooperation with its neighbor Belgium, and militarily, has shared almost all Peace Support Operations abroad relying on Belgian interpreters;
- 2) the high level of education of most Luxembourgiens – with a sufficient knowledge of English, French and German – makes the training of professional interpreters within the army useless¹⁸⁸.

5.9 NETHERLANDS

The fourth – and last – nation to establish a Corps of Military Interpreters during wartime was the Netherlands.

The Dutch Royal Army created a special unit of military mediators on October 17, 1944 to assist the allies during their operations on Dutch territory as well as in Germany¹⁸⁹.

¹⁸⁸ Personal information received by the Defense Director of Luxembourg Fernand Kirch.

¹⁸⁹ Personal information received by the Director of the Dutch Institute of Military History R.J.A. van Gils.

5.9.1 *Vereniging Oud-leden Corps Tolken*¹⁹⁰

When, in 1944, the allied troops entered the Belgian territory and planned to advance into the Netherlands, they immediately had to tackle a linguistic/cultural problem: the lack of liaison officers or interpreters to communicate with the local population and the Dutch Army.

To meet this urgent need, under a Prince Bernhard's provision – in his capacity as Dutch Commander in Chief –, the Dutch Colonel Winter was charged with the recruitment and military training of civil interpreters. On October 17, 1944, the colonel established the Dutch Corps of Military Interpreters, and – in accordance with the allies – he gave life to the *Centraal Aanwervingsbureau voor tolken* (Central Body for the Recruitment of Interpreters) which was based in Eindhoven. After this first recruitment center, many others appeared in Tilburg, Nimega, Den Bosch, Maastricht, Heerlen, Breda, Bergen op Zoom, Enschede, Zwolle, Utrecht, Amsterdam, Venlo, and Groninga.

The recruitment began as calls for volunteers through notes and leaflets. Candidates had to have an age between 21 and 45 years old, and were selected on the basis of their knowledge of English, French and German, as well as their general knowledge.

Initially, the recruitment was carried out without any medical check on the candidates. But it became soon obligatory.

¹⁹⁰ The Corps of Military Interpreters.

The selection was drastic; 50% of the candidates were eliminated right away. The suitable ones were enlisted with the rank of Sergeant (the majority), Lieutenant, or in some cases Captain, according to their age. They were divided among several allied units: the 2nd British Army, the 1st Canadian Army, the 21st Army Group (US Army), the ally administration, and the Court of Appeal.

These interpreters were seen by the allied armies as mere soldiers, hence they did not enjoy any special treatment among them. The candidates, who in October/November 1944 volunteered as interpreters, were adequately warned against the fact that in the case of imprisonment by the Germans, they would be shot without a fair trial, because they were considered partisans and not soldiers by the German troops.

In 1945, the Corps counted with more than 800 military interpreters.

The tasks they were called to carry out were various, and were not limited to linguistic/cultural activities:

- Any-level communication between military authorities and local ones regarding: lodgings, payment of gas, water and electricity bills, confiscated chattels, and staying on friendly territory;
- Negotiations between the military and authorities responsible for the maintenance of roads, canals and bridges on friendly territory, and subsequently in occupied zones as well;

- Mediation in the various misunderstandings, disputes and general problems that could occur between military and civilians;
- Participation in patrols looking for prisoners of war to interrogate;
- Participation as translators in courts under the American and British military administration, as well as in court marshals;
- Participation in the international accusation during relevant crime trials;
- Service as drivers;
- Interrogation of prisoners of war;
- Arrest of nazis;
- Evacuation of concentration camps;
- Assistance to wounded people.

Their role was vital during the war as well as in the following years in creating a linguistic and cultural bridge between peoples.

The Dutch Corps of Military Interpreters was disbanded in 1948.

On October 7, 1994, in Amersfort, many former members of this unit celebrated the 50th anniversary of the foundation of the *Vereniging Oud-leden Corps Tolken*. On that occasion, tribute was paid to the many dead that the war caused among its ranks¹⁹¹.

¹⁹¹ The information in this section is taken from the book: *Tolken in Battle-Dress. Méér dan alleen vertalers. Wel en wee van het Corps Tolken van de Koninklijke Landmacht (1944-1948)*.

5.9.2 Today

As to the current situation, in the Netherlands, there is no Military Institute of Foreign Languages or similar school. The Dutch Ministry of Defense does not provide its servicemen and women with any linguistic schooling.

All military linguists – interpreters, translators, cultural mediators – enroll in the Royal Army already with a solid linguistic background, having attended college, university or private schools for languages. Some of these linguists are also native speakers of languages other than Dutch (refugees or immigrants)¹⁹².

5.10 NORWAY

Once again – as for many other states – information regarding history and current training of Norwegian Military interpreters is meager and insufficient.

I was given the limited facts presented below directly by the Norwegian Ministry of Defense.

Historically, Norway never had any form of organization of military interpreters until the second half of the 20th century. Officers and many soldiers had a sufficient command of English, German and sometimes French from their secondary

¹⁹² Personal information received by Drs. R.J.A. van Gils (Senior information specialist of the Institute of Dutch Military History).

school background, to tackle the plausible linguistic problem between different armies.

The need to turn to and to train interpreters within the armed forces appeared after World War II and especially during the Cold War.

In 1954, recognizing its commitments under the Geneva Conventions on Prisoners of War and the necessity of trained interrogation personnel in case of war with the Soviet Union, Norway established a Military Russian Course that produced linguists – interrogators, interpreters and translators – for the reserve formations of the national Armed Forces.

Later in 1959, this course was placed under the responsibility of the Army School of Intelligence and Security – now the Norwegian School of Intelligence and Security (NORDISS). The course, with the appropriate modifications to adapt it to the changing world order, is still running today.

The main Russian course provided is a combination of a language course – up to a level of approximately 3-3-3-3 on the STANAG 6001 scale – and basic officers’ training with particular emphasis on fields such as intelligence, interrogation and related disciplines.

The course duration is 18 months.

At present, students will have to serve an additional 6 month period as sergeants, before becoming reserve officers and continuing their civilian education or careers.

Students also have the option of a contract employment in an arms control context.

Following this type of training, students' final qualification is not that of fully professional interpreters, since this is not the main purpose of the course, but that of general linguists. However, the graduates of such a practice are capable of functioning as interpreters at a tactical level if the need arises. With further education and experience, many of them do become qualified linguists, able to handle more complex interpreter's tasks. These men/women may be sometimes engaged for specific jobs of limited duration, for instance in an arms control context, or in joint peace missions.

In 1981, a 6 month basic Russian course was started. It supplies basic Russian skills to employees of the Armed Forces and of various other Government personnel.

But Russian is not the only language taught. According to the context in which the Norwegian Armed Forces found themselves to operate, new courses were established.

Events in the Balkans made necessary to train Norwegian Military personnel in Serb-Croatian and Albanian, with their subsequent employment in the Armed Forces engaged in the respective geographical areas with a number of different functions.

Courses of varying length were held. Some of the students became qualified linguists to perform limited tasks as interpreters.

These courses have since then been discontinued.

Since 2004, the School (NORDISS) has offered a 20 month course for Arabic linguists, with subsequent contract

employment. It aims at a minimum level of language proficiency of 3-3-2-2 STANAG 6001.

NORDISS has been charged with planning for plausible future language needs in the Armed Forces. The school will make recommendations regarding new language needs and how these can be met best, as well as, it will arrange in-house linguistic training where this is found to be most expedient.

The establishment of a reserve corps of linguists from various language backgrounds is under consideration.

At present, in the framework of the Norwegian Defense sector, there is a Department which provides for translation and interpretation services to the military and the general staff. Yet, Norway does not have a standing corps of professional military interpreters. Needs are mainly met by contract employment or on an ad-hoc basis.

In most NATO countries, there is a great need to train military personnel in the main language of command, English. As to Norway, however, the level of English skills in the general population is so high that no special military English program is considered necessary, except for officers' candidates in the Military Colleges¹⁹³.

5.11 PORTUGAL

Similar to the Luxembourgian situation, Portugal's history of military interpreters can be summarized in a few sentences. The

¹⁹³ Personal information received by Bergheim Thomas Larsen (NORDISS).

organic table of the Portuguese Defense has never provided for the interpreter's office, either as a member of the general staff, or as a linguist in Peace Support Operations. This professional figure does not exist in the military field of this nation.

In the framework of the linguistic capacity of the Portuguese Ministry of Defense, today Portugal can count only on a limited number of civil translators – divided into two linguistic areas: Germanic (code 646-SP) and Romance (code 648-SP) – who are hired according to the Armed Forces' needs and on the basis of domestic ad-hoc situations. Translators are requested to possess a degree in foreign languages attained either at a Portuguese or a foreign university. According to the Portuguese General Regulations on Military Education, dated February 14, 2002, the suitable candidates – selected on the basis of their final grade – must then attend a 9 week basic course for officers, *Curso Especial de Formação de Oficiais*, offered by the Army, and are engaged through annual contracts which can be extended up to seven consecutive years.

The Portuguese Ministry of Defense does not provide its servicemen and women with any linguistic schooling. In Portugal there is no Military Institute of Foreign Languages or similar schools¹⁹⁴.

5.12 UNITED KINGDOM

¹⁹⁴ The information of this section was privately received from Director General Alberto Rodrigues Coelho (*Direcção-General de Pessoal e Recrutamento Militar*).

The fact that English turned to be after World War I the new – and current – *lingua franca* language of diplomacy for almost any form of international relationships, contacts or communications, opened undoubtedly a linguistic reserved lane for all English speaking nations, which can definitely count less on the use of interpreters/translator than other countries.

The United Kingdom does not have a Corps of Military Interpreters, and never had. Hence, the British Ministry of Defense does not possess any documentation which provides any consolidated information regarding the structure and utilization of such specialists either now or in the recent past.

Having said that, the employment of civil as well as military interpreters/translators within the Defense sector is a well established practice.

The British Ministry of Defense possesses a ‘Defense Language Service’ which provides interpreting, translation, and other linguistic services to the Ministry. Specifically, this body assigns interpreters for a wide range of conferences, meetings and visits in the UK and abroad. Some of these are hosted or attended by Defense Ministers, Service chiefs and senior staff, but interpreters are also allocated to a large number of technical or lower-level collaborative meetings and visits including equipment procurement projects.

The Ministry of Defense currently has three in-house interpreters. Additionally, it draws on a panel of approved freelance professional conference interpreters. These have been carefully selected according to stringent criteria. In most cases, the prerequisite is evidence of postgraduate qualification in

simultaneous and consecutive interpreting or equivalent experience.

The Defense Language Service is particularly interested in experience in technical and/or government interpreting, especially in the defense sector.

In the few cases in which the Language Service cannot meet a need from the panel of approved freelance interpreters, it turns to the services of an agency.

There are some areas, though, where the Defense Language Service does not provide interpreters.

Interpreting requirements of defense staff in British Embassies and High Commissions are normally met by their staff or locally engaged freelance interpreters.

The need for interpreters in military operations, exercises, and assistance abroad is normally filled by regular or reservist servicemen and women in the Armed Forces but may also be met by locally engaged freelance interpreters.

Servicemen and women are given the possibility to learn foreign languages and to attend interpreting courses at the **Defense School of Languages**.

Much of what the School delivers is based, in output terms, on the NATO STANAG Standard Language Proficiency. Unfortunately, for confidentiality reasons, any other information regarding programs, courses and testing is classified¹⁹⁵.

¹⁹⁵ Personal information received by Clive Phillips, from the Defense Language School of the United Kingdom.

5.13 UNITED STATES

The United States never had an official professional *Corps of Military Interpreters* and does not possess it today either. There is no documentation regarding the official employment of military mediators during World War I and II, the Cold War, or other more recent conflicts. Yet, the USA has been training military interpreters, translators, interrogators and linguists for decades – and more precisely since 1941 – and it is the country with the largest military language institute of the world. Objectively and undoubtedly – after seeing programs and curricula – it offers the most complete, advanced and comprehensive language courses for military personnel when compared to all the countries taken into consideration in this work.

As we will see, US military interpreters today have the professional profiles that are closest to those of spies and interrogators (described in Chapter I) than in any other nation considered.

5.13.1 US Army Language Program for Interpreters and Translators

A nation's defense depends also on information from foreign language newspapers, magazines, radio broadcasts and other sources. Therefore, it is felt by the US as very important that some of the members of the Army be able to read and understand the many languages of the world. To meet this need, the **US Army Language Program** provides the training of military interpreters and translators.

The Translator/Interpreter in the US Army is primarily responsible for converting written or spoken foreign languages into English and other languages and vice versa, and they usually specialize in a particular foreign language. Some of their duties may include:

- translating accurately written and spoken foreign language material to and from English;
- questioning prisoners of war, enemy deserters, and civilian informers in their native languages;
- recording foreign radio transmission using sensitive communications equipment;
- translating foreign documents, such as battle plans and personnel records;
- translating foreign books and articles describing foreign equipment and construction techniques.

Job training for translators/interpreters consists of nine weeks of basic training, where participants learn basic soldiering skills, and 7 to 20 weeks of advanced individual training and on-the-job instruction, including practice in interpretation. Part of this time is spent in the classroom and part in the field.

Longer training is necessary for specialties that do not require foreign language fluency prior to entry. For these specialties, foreign language training for 6 to 12 months is provided.

Some of the skills participants learn are:

- interrogation (questioning) methods;
- use and care of communications equipment;
- procedures for preparing reports.

To enter this occupation, all candidates are required to have normal hearing and the ability to speak clearly and distinctly, beside fluency in a foreign language.

The military has currently about 8,000 interpreters and translators, and more than 14,000 soldier-linguists on active duty and in the reserve components. They are all enlisted in the MOS (Military Occupational Specialty) 97EL, 97L, 98XL, according to their qualification.

Each year, the services need new interpreters and translators due to changes in personnel and the demands of the field. After job training, interpreters and translators work under the direction of more experienced workers and supervisors. With experience, they work more independently on military bases, aboard ships, or in airplanes. In time, interpreters and translators may become directors of translation for large bases.

The civilian counterparts work generally for government agencies, embassies, universities, and companies that conduct business overseas. Their work is similar to the work of military interpreters and translators.

All language courses are held at the Defense Language Institute of Monterey (California) and in its various detached branches all over the United States¹⁹⁶.

5.13.2 Defense Language Institute – World’s largest such facility

Located on a vast bluff that commands a sweeping view of Monterey Bay, on the site of the original Spanish landings of 1602 and 1770, the Defense Language Institute on the Presidio of Monterey is the largest language institution in the world.

Its role is simple yet sweeping:

“The mission of the Defense Language Institute is to provide foreign language instruction in support of national security requirements; to support and evaluate command language programs worldwide; to conduct academic research into the language learning process; and to administer a worldwide, standard test and evaluation system”¹⁹⁷.

History

The Defense Language Institute traces its roots to the eve of America’s entry into World War II, when the US Army established a secret school at the Presidio of San Francisco to teach the Japanese language. Classes began on November 1, 1941, with four instructors and 60 students in an abandoned

¹⁹⁶ The information in this section is taken from the website: [Hhttp://www.goarmy.com](http://www.goarmy.com)H (consulted in August 2004).

¹⁹⁷ [Hhttp://www.monterey.org/langcap/dli.html](http://www.monterey.org/langcap/dli.html)H (consulted in August 2004).

airplane hanger. The students were mostly second-generation Japanese-Americans (Nisei) from the West Coast.

During the war the Military Intelligence Service Language School (MISLS), as it came to be called, grew dramatically. More than 6,000 graduates served throughout the Pacific theater during the war and the subsequent occupation of Japan. By 1946, the School had outgrown its facilities and moved to the historic Presidio of Monterey.

At the Presidio, the renamed Army Language School expanded rapidly in 1947-48 to meet the requirements of America's global commitments during Cold War. Instructors, including native speakers of more than 30 languages were recruited from all over the world. Russian became the largest language program, followed by Chinese, Korean, and German. After the Korean War (1950-53), the School developed a national reputation for excellence in foreign language education.

The Army Language School led the way with the audio-lingual method and the application of educational technology such as the language laboratory.

In 1963, the Army Language School became the Defense Language Institute (DLI) and opened several branches all over the US.

During the peak of American involvement in Vietnam (1965-73), the DLI stepped up the pace of language education. While regular language education continued unabated, more than 20,000 service personnel studied Vietnamese through the DLI's programs, many taking a special eight-week military adviser 'survival' course.

In the 1970s, the Institute's headquarters and all resident language education were consolidated at the West Coast Branch and renamed the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center (DLIFLC). With the advent of the All-Volunteer Forces and the opening of most specialties to women, the character of the student population gradually changed.

Since the end of the Vietnam War, the Institute has experienced an exciting period of growth, winning academic accreditations. The continuous rise in student input forced the Institute to open new branches.

Numerous academic changes have been made ever since. More instructors have been recruited, new instructional materials and tests have been written, and a comprehensive master plan has been developed. Teaching methodology has become more and more proficiency-oriented, and team teaching has been implemented.

In recent years, the Institute has taken on challenging new missions, including support for Arms Control Treaty Verification, the War on Drugs, Operation Desert Storm, Operation Restore Hope, and Operations Enduring Freedom and Noble Eagle.

The Institute today

With a faculty of about 750, most of them civilians and native speakers of the language they instruct, the DLI offers today courses in two dozen languages plus dialects.

Basic courses lengths are from 25 to 63 weeks, depending upon the difficulty of the language taught. While a basic Romance language program lasts 25 weeks, language instruction in Chinese, Japanese, Korean or Arabic lasts more than a year.

The DLI offers intermediate, advanced, specialized, and refresher language instruction. The programs include instruction in the history, culture, and current events of the nations in which the language are spoken.

The Institute's academic programs are supported by more than 1,000 classrooms and faculty offices, about 50 audio language labs and eight computer-enhanced language training labs. The DLI's Aiso Library contains more than 5,000 foreign television programs and films, in excess of 80,000 volumes in more than 40 languages, and hundreds of foreign language newspapers and periodicals.

The average annual number of classroom hours taught per year is more than 500,000, enrollment is about 2,500, nearly all of it from the military services.

Since the DLI is a military training school, it falls under a military chain of command. The Commanding General, US Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), has administrative responsibility to manage, operate, fund, and provide personnel resources support for the DLI.

The DLI plays a key role in providing skilled linguists for the military. It teaches foreign languages to other Department of Defense agencies and also to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the National Aeronautics and Space

Administration, the Drug Enforcement Administration, and the US Border Patrol.

The languages taught at the DLI reflect world affairs. The end of the Cold War meant a decrease in the number of students studying Russian, German, Polish, Hungarian and Czech, but the study of Arabic is increasing tremendously. Enrollment has doubled and Arabic is becoming the largest language program. Enrollment in Vietnamese language courses is also up significantly.

The Defense Language Institute is known for its intensive curriculum. Students study only their assigned language divided into small classes – 10 or fewer students – for six to seven hours a day.

The DLI not only offers courses to students on the 395-acre Presidio of Monterey. It also uses satellites “to sustain our linguistics in the field,” said Davis. This 24-hour per day operation provides two-way visual and audio interaction with a teacher to US personnel who cannot leave their job to attend classes full time. About 10,000 hours are broadcast to military bases each year in several languages.

All foreign language teaching takes place in one of nine Schools disseminated within the US, plus the Operation Endure Freedom Task Force:

- Asian I (Chinese Mandarin, Japanese, Tagalog, Thai, Vietnamese);
- Asian II (Korean);
- East European I (Russian, Serbian/Croatian);

- East European II (Russian, Persian-Farsi);
- Middle East I (Arabic, Hebrew);
- Middle East II (Arabic);
- West European and Latin American (French, German, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish, Greek and Turkish);
- The School of Continuing Education; and
- OEFTF (Pashto, Persian-Dari, and Uzbek).

Each school is headed by a civilian Dean, who is responsible for planning and implementing assigned programs in foreign language training and curriculum development, implementing academic and administrative policy, and managing the School's annual manpower and budget allocations. An Associate Dean, who is a senior military officer, provides counsel and assistance to the Dean, monitors students progress, and directs the School's Military Language Instructor Program¹⁹⁸.

5.14 THE CASE OF ICELAND

¹⁹⁸ The information in this section is taken from the DLI's website: <http://www.monterey.org/langcap/dli.html> (consulted in August 2004).

As to this last nation, I have to admit, after an entire year of research, that I was not able to find any information on history, training of military interpreters, or the existence of military language schools.

I tried constantly to get in contact with the Icelandic Ministry of Foreign Affairs, or any other body responsible for these matters, but all my efforts were in vain, since I never got any answer whatsoever.

Nevertheless, the situation of Iceland is peculiar and worthy attention.

Iceland is the only NATO member state not to have either a Ministry of Defense or its own armed forces. The reasons lie mainly on three factors: its history as a neutral nation; its late independence from Denmark (1918), and the military protection/invasion it has always received from the UK, first, and from the US subsequently.

To better understand Iceland's position today, it is necessary to have a short overview of its past.

Iceland's republican history begins in 1918 with the independence from Denmark and the signing of the 25-year Danish-Icelandic Act of Union, which sanctioned the beginning of a policy of strict neutrality. In 1939, with war imminent in Europe, the German Reich pressed for landing rights for its aircrafts for alleged trans-Atlantic flights. The Icelandic government turned them down.

A British request to establish bases in Iceland for the protection of the vital North Atlantic supply lines, after German forces occupied Denmark and Norway in April of 1940, also was turned down in accordance with the neutrality policy.

Therefore, it was a rude surprise for the people of Reykjavík to awaken to the sight of a British invasion force on May 10, 1940.

Iceland protested the use of military force by Britain but immediately accepted the *fait accompli*. Icelanders as a whole were philosophically aligned with the West, and recognized the country's strategic importance to the British.

In the late spring of 1941, following talks between British Prime Minister Churchill and US President Roosevelt, Iceland agreed to a tri-partite treaty under which the United States was to relieve the British garrison in Iceland on the condition that all military forces be withdrawn from the island immediately upon the conclusion of the war in Europe.

The geographical proximity of Iceland to the convoy routes meant a large military force stationed there throughout the war, with British, American, Canadian, Norwegian, Polish and South African troops.

At the end of the war in Europe, the British forces left Iceland. The United States, however, requested long-term lease of base facilities such as the strategic Keflavík Airfield (which will become the most important Icelandic NATO base).

In 1949, Iceland became a charter member of NATO, but with the understanding that this commitment would neither require the establishment of its own armed forces – for which there were no available resources – nor the basing of foreign forces on its soil in peacetime.

Yet, the Cold War and the Korean War changed Icelandic reluctance to host foreign forces. As tensions between East and West grew, it was seen by the government of Iceland that

membership in NATO was not, in and of itself, a sufficient defense.

Accordingly, following a request from NATO for the establishment of a tangible defense for Iceland, a Defense Agreement between the United States and Iceland was signed on May 5, 1951.

Under the agreement, the US assumed the defense of Iceland and the areas around the country on behalf of NATO, while Iceland was committed to providing the land necessary to carry this out. In essence, the Defense Agreement established the Iceland Defense Force (IDF) on the condition that the impact of the force be limited and not impose any adverse effects on the local population.

The Iceland Defense Force's official contact with the government of Iceland is through the Iceland-US Defense Council, which meets on a regular basis to identify and resolve issues related to military operations and the base population.

Current Icelandic members of the Defense Council include two senior government officials and five politically appointed members who are prominent citizens. The American side is represented by the five senior officers of the Defense Force, including the Commander, and one civilian officer.

During the 1960s, control of the NATO base Keflavík passed from the Army to the Air Force and finally to the US Navy, where it stands today. During the 1970s and 80s, the Navy increased their maritime patrolling from Iceland, while the Air Force remained ever vigilant over the Northern skies. With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact countries,

the NATO Base has continued to change on into the 90s, and assume its role in the new world order¹⁹⁹.

Despite Iceland's colorful and rich history, marked by foreign nations, no attention is paid to the linguistic matter. No documents reveal the employment of linguists or military interpreters during and after the Second World War.

I believe the decision of choosing English as the official language of the IDF may be the reason for interpreters not being necessary.

¹⁹⁹ All historical information in this section is taken from the Iceland Defense Force' website: <http://www.nctskef.navy.mil/IDF/history.htm> (consulted in August 2004).

Chapter VI

PERSONAL EXPERIENCES

6.1 OFFICIAL AND UNOFFICIAL STORIES

In spite of the general lack of literature on military interpreting, the difficulties I had in tracing the few official files present in classified military archives, and the ignorance surrounding this topic at the academic level, I was nevertheless able to find and collect a number of personal experiences of individual interpreters. These experiences are very interesting in order to understand the military interpreter profession. They are the stories of single individuals who – by chance, due to the circumstances, the emergency of the context, or a courageous personal decision – used their capacities to fill the

“Q: [...] Was there any training in simultaneous interpretation?”

A: None.

Q: What training did you have for that?

A: Again, none. I had as much to do with interpreting then as I have now with nuclear energy, that is nothing at all [...]

Q: [...] If you could live your life anew, what would you like to be?

A: In spite of all the failure, heartbreaks, and problems I’m afraid I’d still choose to be an

linguistic gap during wars or any other conflicts.

These experiences can be roughly divided into two different categories: the official and the unofficial stories.

The former are generally collected in books which can be easily traced and found in bookstores or libraries, such as the memories of Paul Schmidt, former military person who became Hitler's personal interpreter; the history of Alexander Bogomolow, Russian diplomatic interpreter in Germany after World War II; the work of Valentin Berezkhov, Stalin's personal interpreter; the improvised professional beginning of Irena Dobosz, Polish diplomatic interpreter working for the Neutral Nations Commission supervising the armistice in Korea (1953); or the job carried out during the first Gulf War by Aziza Molyneux-Berry, translator/interpreter of Arabic, member of the ITI Council and coordinator of their Arabic network.

There are also famous interpreters who made a career thanks to their charisma and are remembered for their talent, passion, dedication, intelligence, and erudition. It is worth mentioning: Paul Mantoux, former captain of the French Army, first real official diplomatic interpreter of the Paris Peace Conference (1919), historian, professor at the London University, and later co-director of the International Higher School of Geneva; Jean Herbert, former military, diplomatic interpreter, specialist in consecutive interpretation who worked for Clemenceau, Wilson, Lloyd George, Poincaré, Mussolini, Churchill; Georg Michaelis, professor of English, French and

philosophy, German interpreter during the Paris Conference; and many others who worked in the first international conferences like: Gustave Henri Camerlynck, co-writer of many books on the didactics of English; Charles Peirce, professor at the John Hopkins, Yale and Ohio Universities; Stephen Bonsal, colonel, journalist, and writer who traveled all over the world; and Major Arthur Herbert Birse, Stalin's and Churchill's interpreter during the conferences post-World War II, and Churchill's personal interpreter.

Other famous interpreters in this category, among many others, are: Lieutenant Peter Uiberall, Hans Jacob, Erich Sommer, Eugen Dollman, Erwin Weit, Vernon Walters, Robert Ekvall, Hermann Kusterer, Elisabeth Heyward²⁰⁰.

This team of learned men of letters constituted part of the corps of interpreters which served at the international conference of 1919 and the following ones²⁰¹.

They were forced – by the warfare – to learn the interpretation techniques through self-study on-the-job. Nobody had a clear idea about the nature of the job or its practitioners, nor what to expect from them. Interpreters had no previous training. Nevertheless, their academic qualification, their knowledge of foreign languages, and their cosmopolitanism patterned an adequate cultural background to perform sufficiently; as Herbert recalls speaking about his very first steps in this profession:

I am grateful that my interpretations

²⁰⁰ Andres, 2002: 15-24 and Gaiba, 1999: 14.

²⁰¹ Van Hoof, 1962: 19 and Delisle & Woodsworth, 1995: 268.

³ Baigorri, 2000: 62.

were not recorded, because if I heard them now I should certainly blush. However, that was the best that could be done at the time and, strange as it may sound, it was appreciated.

(Herbert, 1978: 6)

If the improvised service provided in that venue was truly appreciated, the reason was also that there was no practicable alternative, especially in a warfare scenario, in which rhetoric niceties were the very last preoccupation when it was a matter of saving the lives of people in trenches under the noise of the howitzers and enemy shelling²⁰². In addition, none of the ranking officers present in the various meetings had the competence to check what was said by the interpreters:

[...] However unsatisfactory according to modern standards, our performance was thought miraculous, largely I suppose because none of the high ranking officers on our side of the table was competent to check what we said.

(Herbert, 1978: 6)

However, besides the experiences of these decorated and honored men, there are many other experiences – the majority – which are ‘unofficial’, off the records, hidden, hard to discover, lived by common people who did not serve great leaders or dictators, who did not contribute to major causes or historical negotiations. Their work was as

precious and valuable as that of their well-known colleagues’.

It is the cases of some courageous Belgian Military Interpreters performing their duty under shelling, bombing, and killing; the case of American servicepersons acting as ‘lips’ in PSOs in Afghanistan or Iraq; the case of UN Military Observers in Sarajevo, in Turkey, in Vietnam, in Haiti; the case of the so called ‘*niños de la guerra*’, Spanish kids sent to Russia during the Spanish Civil War (1936-39) who turned to be interpreters; and many many other examples which, through funny and at the same time tragic anecdotes, reveal glances of lives which have been marked significantly by this particular profession.

Their memories are not imprinted in academic books or best-selling biographies; in some cases, they reside in military archives, in others, they can be found randomly as personal stories on the web or in some newspapers.

In the following sections I selected a number of self-explanatory episodes concerning some of these interpretation ‘pioneers’ – official as well as unofficial – trying to focus on the most exhilarating, funny, but also dramatic and touching moment of their careers. It is not an attempt to write summarized biographies, rather the will to bring to light small anecdotes that are often considered of secondary importance, but that, many times, shed a light on aspects which would be otherwise overlooked.

6.2 THE DICTATORS' INTERPRETERS AND OTHER PIONEERS

The classification *dictators' interpreters* involved all those linguists who worked at the services of great dictators such as Hitler or Stalin, as personal interpreters.

The dictators' interpreters normally acted in bilateral negotiations; they shared many characteristics with their colleagues interpreting in conference settings, but they also enjoyed special privileges.

The close identification they were obliged to have with the political leader they worked for, and the belonging to his political party, was a necessary prerequisite for their professional job. The ruler's trust in his interpreter, both at a linguistic and personal level, was essential for his involvement in delicate negotiations²⁰³.

However, this dependence relationship challenged the basic principles of the interpreter's code of conduct. For instance, even though Hitler asserted the neutrality of his interpreter Schmidt, the interpreter's memories and the documents we have reveal how he was well integrated into the dictator's team²⁰⁴.

The interpreters' restless availability was not restricted to the common interpreter's tasks, but it involved others, such as diplomatic or protocol exercises, as well as activities as a personal secretary.

Their constant presence next to their leaders in historical

²⁰³ Baigorri, 2000: 267-268.

²⁰⁴ Baigorri, 2000: 268.

events gave them a great deal of visibility which enhanced their personal profile in front of the world heads of state and government.

Due to their association with the most powerful men of the time, these interpreters enjoyed a privileged status and competence that in many cases exceeded that of a mere linguist.

Yet, their reward was moral rather than material (eulogies and decorations); with the exception maybe of the piling up of a fruitful experience which helped them to write down the memories that allowed us to discover all these details regarding their profession.

The dependence and the trust of their chiefs implied, on the one hand, the perishableness of the interpreter due to reasons not related to his linguistic ability. On the other, the involvement in the dictator's regime implied also the interpreters' headlong fall once the regime that pampered them collapsed.

6.2.1 Paul Mantoux

The interpreters working for the Paris Peace Conference (1919) were registered in their respective delegations as officers – very frequently military – since they were recruited in warfare.

The circumstances imposed by the conflict obliged the linguists to work in exceptional conditions, without considering working hours, mental fatigue or other

*technical conditions*²⁰⁵.

One of the aspects that leaps out – in the comparison with modern time professional interpreters – is the multitasking profile of the diplomatic interpreter.

For instance, Paul Mantoux – former French army captain and first official interpreter of this conference – dictated, directly from his notes, the off-the-record *acts*, which were later used by the French President of the Council, Georges Clemenceau. This is something that today would correspond more to the translator's work.

According to his writings, the notes that Mantoux had to take during the different sessions of the conference – in order to carry out the consecutive interpreting – were requested every day by the French Prime Minister. Each morning, Mantoux had to dictate the contents of his notes – rewritten with more clarity in a great hurry the previous night – to a stenographer put at his disposal by the Chamber of Deputies, who delivered them to Clemenceau²⁰⁶.

Mantoux turned out to be the unavoidable reference point to clarify misunderstandings among statesmen. He was given a high profile and everybody's trust.

He also, from time to time, had to carry out other tasks. For example, he had to act as spokesperson before the press, when the discussion raised the question of the publicity of the sessions, before the inauguration of the conference.

Besides, there was the widespread conviction that all the

²⁰⁵ Baigorri, 2000: 43.

²⁰⁶ Mantoux, 1955:I: 7-9.

British Prime Minister's – Lloyd George – knowledge about French politics and politicians was the fruit of Mantoux's amusing comments and sagacious evaluations (Baigorri, 2000: 44).

The US Secretary of State of the time, Robert Lansing, left us a detailed description of Mantoux's way of working, with a tone of great admiration worth reporting:

[...] No interpreter could have performed his onerous task with greater skill than he. Possessing an unusual memory for thought and phrase, he did not interpret sentence by sentence, but, while an address or statement was being made, he listened intently, occasionally jotting down a note with the stub of a lead pencil. When the speaker had finished, this remarkable linguist would translate his remarks into English or into French as the case might be, without the least hesitation and with a fluency and completeness which were almost uncanny. Even if the speaker had consumed ten, fifteen, or twenty minutes, the address was accurately repeated in the other language, while Professor Mantoux would employ inflection and emphasis with an oratorical skill that added greatly to the perfectness of the interpretation. No statement was too dry to make him inattentive or too technical for his vocabulary. Eloquence, careful reasoning, and unusual style in expression were apparently

easily rendered into idiomatic English from French, or vice versa. He seemed almost to take over the character of the individual whose words he translated, and to reproduce his emotions as well as his thoughts. His extraordinary attainments were recognized by every one benefited by them, and his services commanded general admiration and praise.

(Lansing, 1921 : 105-106)

This paragraph embraces all the key elements of consecutive interpretation: language knowledge, memory, attention, professional familiarity with the subject, oratorical skills, the ability to empathetically reproduce the emotions of the original speaker, and even, however fleetingly, a reference to an embryonic note-taking technique.

Lansing's description is that of an extremely attentive observer, who is left astonished in front of the almost *uncanny* aptitude of the interpreter for managing the languages²⁰⁷.

A worth mentioning peculiarity of Paul Mantoux is that, during all diplomatic interpreting of that period, he always wore the uniform of the French Army Captain (Baigorri, 2000: 61).

6.2.2 Stephen Bonsal

²⁰⁷ Baigorri, 1999: 30.

Among the interpretation pioneers of the period following World War I, it is worth mentioning also Colonel Stephen Bonsal, – American soldier, diplomat, journalist, and writer²⁰⁸ – who, in 1944, published the diary of his working days as an interpreter at the Paris Peace Conference (1919). Among the many misadventures of the conference, Bonsal had to struggle with the *chuchotage* technique used in that venue.

Consecutive interpretation turned out to be, quite soon, a cumbersome, annoying, and boring process in which each different delegation had to wait long periods of time to have the speech translated into their language or to have the replies to their questions and comments.

Besides, the acoustic conditions were terrible for the interpreters, who had to speak in front of the delegates without any technical device overcoming the murmuring of the annoyed parties who already listened to the speech in their own language, or knew both languages and did not need any translation.

For these inconveniences, the *chuchotage* – or ‘whispering’ in English – was adopted. But according to Bonsal’s memories, this form of interpreting proved to be even more intense and tiring than consecutive, and resulted to be the hardest task he had to carry out those days.

Nobody liked this whispering method and to avoid performing with this technique, some potential interpreters

²⁰⁸ Andres, 2002: 15.

even pretended to be voiceless (Bonsal, 1944: 23).

The fatigue that *chuchotage* implied made Bonsal try to convince the American President Woodrow Wilson and one of his chief advisers, Edward Mandell House, to summarize in English the French speeches instead of repeating them word by word. But the two statesmen turned a deaf ear to this suggestion pretending to listen to a verbatim translation.

However, the problems did not regard only the technique used to interpret the speeches, but also the accent of the world leaders were another reason of complaints by the interpreters. On this issue Bonsal says:

I was drafted away from the head of the Council table [...] and I was catapulted to the other end of the table where I was beset on all sides by inquiries from Venizelos, in Cretan French, from Diamandy in Roumanian French, from Dmowski in Polish French, and from Vesnitch in the French of Belgrade. They were patient and kind and I, indeed, survived the first session, but could I continue?

(Bonsal, 1944 : 22)

In his diary dated February 16, 1919, Bonsal recalls his complaints to House for having to translate from the barbarian French spoken by Polish, Slavs, Cretans, saying that for this job it was better calling on professor Mantoux:

[...] “I have to put into plain English speeches that are often made in the barbaric French of Warsaw, of Zagreb, of Belgrade, and worst of all, the French of Crete. You really ought to have a man like Professor Mantoux, who has spent his life in straightening out mixed metaphors and simplifying the remarks of incoherent statesmen.”

(Bonsal, 1944: 62)

6.2.3 Paul Schmidt

Paul Schmidt is one of the so classified *dictators' interpreters* because he served Hitler during his entire regime. He is also one of the interpreters who became well-known thanks to his *memories*.

On the eve of World War I, Schmidt was a bright, smart young soldier with a good English and French mastery and great diplomatic aspirations. Thanks to his academic qualification and his linguistic abilities, he happened to be selected as a new interpreter in the 1923 Hague Trial, and this constituted the prelude of his future career in this field. In 1935, Schmidt found himself working in a Round Table Conference next to Hitler. From this moment on, he would be his personal interpreter.

In line with his memories, Schmidt was a very active and enterprising man, with a strong personality and a deep

proclivity to be always at the center of attention.

The association of his fame with Hitler's constituted for Schmidt a double-edged reward. On the one hand, that of feeling himself an integrated part of the workings of the history course; on the other, the risk of falling apart, and at the end of the story, be recognized for being on the *wrong* side of the battle.

As Ekvall says, *the interpreter takes part in the victory as well as in the defeat* (1960: 77).

The association of Schmidt with the Nazi regime led to a series of mishaps that persecuted him after the Germany defeat: arrest, a period of imprisonment, and even a certain time in a concentration camp. Yet even in these circumstances, he made good use of his linguistic ability and, thanks to his foxy intelligence, *sold* what he knew in exchange for his freedom²⁰⁹.

Schmidt put everything at the services of the Allies in the Nuremberg processes, in the witnesses' prison, and even in the American language service (Schmidt, 1958: 548). However, as stated in his book, his bright career ended with the fall of the Nazi regime:

Als ich damals am 8. Mai 1945 von der bedingungslosen Kapitulation des Reiches erfuhr, war zwar meine Dolmetscherlaufbahn im Auswärtigen Amt beendet. Meine Dolmetschet- und Übersetzertätigkeit als solche sollte jedoch noch weitergehen.

(Schmidt, 1949: 586)

²⁰⁹ Baigorri, 2000: 266.

6.2.4 Arthur Herbert Birse

To terminate these short descriptions of the job carried out by the first ‘official’ interpreters of international conferences, it is worth recalling the improvisation and the inexperience that the English Lieutenant Arthur Herbert Birse confessed to have used in dealing with international political settings, deserving anyway the recognition of important political leaders²¹⁰. In his memories, Birse recalls how, without any experience of political talks, he had to interpret for Stalin and Churchill in their first meeting (1942):

The Embassy interpreter was ill and I was to replace him at Churchill’s talk with Stalin that night. I protested that I had had no experience of political talks, and that I should certainly be below the standard required, but he [the Ambassador] insisted. I understand that it was an order.

(Birse, 1967: 97)

Birse proceeds describing how his introduction to this high-level interpreting assignment was unexpected and fortuitous:

I was untrained and inexperienced

²¹⁰ See also Andres, 2002: 17.

except in interpreting the military topics learned as part of my work in the Military Mission. My only qualification was my knowledge of Russian.

(Birse, 1967: 106)

Despite his lack of experience though, right after the interview, the British Prime Minister called Birse to express his satisfaction with the translation, and appointed him as his personal interpreter. Birse recalls this episode in his memories (Birse, 1967: 104) noting that the words of commendation expressed by Churchill and the will of the Prime Minister to rely from that moment on always on him as his personal interpreter swept away immediately his mental fatigue and were remembered as the most gratifying eulogy of his entire career.

Yet, this is only one of the many examples of praise received by the interpreter. Birse worked for the British government in all the main conferences during and after the Second World War – Tehran 1943, Yalta 1945, and Potsdam 1945 – receiving constant eulogies and panegyrics from Churchill as well as from the American President Roosevelt (Birse, 1967: 161).

Lieutenant Birse also received tangible honorific rewards, such as British decorations (MBE and CBE, *Member and Commander of the British Empire*, respectively), as well as Soviet emblems.

6.3 COMMON STORIES OF ORDINARY PEOPLE

As anticipated at the beginning of this chapter, many are the stories whose protagonists are not famous interpreters, but ordinary citizens, who turned to be linguists by chance or due to the emergency circumstances they found themselves involved in.

Among the many repercussions following World War I, from a linguistic point of view, one that had a remarkable importance was that of the forced evacuations – definitive in many cases – of millions of people.

Frequently, these refugees brought with them their cultural background and their native language, which was passed on spontaneously from one generation to the other, and, thanks to them, could spread out and take root in foreign nations.

This process gave life to a large group of polyglots with deep cultural roots, which would eventually turn out to be a fertile soil for the birth of manifold interpreters.

The following examples will corroborate this reasoning.

6.3.1 René Arnaud

This is the case of a spontaneous interpreter of World War I, whose memories confirmed explicitly the important role the army played in his linguistic background.

René Arnaud was a French soldier who was sent to the front in January 1915, at the age of 21 as an inexperienced reservist, but who, thanks to his erudition and knowledge of languages, achieved the rank of captain and eventually managed to command a unit and also a battalion (Arnaud, 1966: 152).

His mastery of English turned out to be an excellent visiting card and the key to make a career. All thanks to the farsighted decision taken by his father when Arnaud was 10 and was about to enter Rocheford school. The choice was between English and German as foreign language and, since all his classmates already studied English to get into the Naval Academy, his father made the same choice, with a decision that would influence the course of Arnaud's life (Arnaud, 1966: 153).

Arnaud recalls that the year before his enlistment, the final exam of the English course he was attending consisted in sight translating a passage from the English writer John Ruskin (1819-1900).

When, in August 1915, the British troops reached Somme, he wanted to practice his English, but the experience revealed how far apart literary English and everyday spoken English were. The British soldiers continued to talk about 'blankets', Arnaud recalls (Arnaud, 1966: 34), but he did not know the meaning of this word and could not

understand what they actually wanted. He had never come across this term in Ruskin's writings.

Yet, the constant contacts with the British troops helped Arnaud to make big progress. In June 1918, after many ups and downs, he was moved from the front to the rearguard to give linguistic assistance to the American forces.

6.3.2 *Los niños de la guerra.* The case of Araceli Ruiz Toribios

With the same repercussions of World War I described above, the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) triggered the largest exile of people recorded in all Spanish history. A very interesting, yet largely unknown, phenomenon to this regard was the evacuation of the so called *niños de la guerra* (war's children).

More than 30,000 children were sent by their parents abroad to free them from the atrocities of the conflict. The majority of these kids went back home soon after the end of the Civil War, but some 3,000, who had been sent to the Soviet Union in 1937 and 1938, were trapped by World War II and subsequently by the Cold War, and had to wait many years to go back to Spain.

These children attended Russian schools and universities, but never lost contact with their Spanish culture and their native language, mainly thanks to Spanish educators who were sent abroad alongside them.

Many of this large group of bilinguals, after terminating their academic career, found a job as translators and interpreters in the Soviet Union, in Spain, or in the new-born international organizations²¹¹.

This is the case of Araceli Ruiz Toribios, a girl of the Spanish Civil War who, making full use of the vicissitudes of her personal story and the world history, ended up working as interpreter and translator.

Araceli was born in Spain in 1924 and at the age of 13, as many children her age, was sent to the Soviet Union at the beginning of the Spanish Civil War for a better life.

Here, she attended Russian schools, but the cohabitation with other Spanish kids in special institutes, *casas de niños*, helped her to maintain her mother tongue alive.

In a period in which the interpreting profession was carried out almost exclusively by men, the education received in the new country changed completely Araceli's life. She became a professional interpreter in Russia, and after the Second World War, she could make better use of her linguistic combination thanks to the introduction of Russian as the 6th official language of the UN.

Later on, she also worked in Cuba for the military, in difficult and tense conditions, without an adequate training. She had no previous experience in the military lexicon or regulations and in the armament environment. The officers were used to give orders on all sides and pretended to be obeyed verbatim also by the interpreters, as Ruiz Toribios recalls:

²¹¹ Baigorri, 2004.

A: [...] en la época de mi trabajo en Cuba nada de preparación. Era una clase en la que tenía delante 30 o 40 soldados y el capitán o el teniente ruso que hablaba y tú directamente a interpretar. ¡Y era técnica militar, que no conocía! Nosotros no éramos militares, éramos civiles. Pero los militares rusos nos trataban como si fuéramos militares. Recuerdo que íbamos en coche y el coronel al que acompañaba cogía el "Gramma" y me decía : "Traduce". " No, yo no voy a traducir ahora, en camino. Cuando lleguemos traduzco lo que quiera, pero en camino no me voy a estropear la vista." Te daban la orden y ya está. [...]

(Baigorri, 2000)

Ruiz Toribios also recalls a funny/dramatic anecdote during her staying in Cuba, which reveals the extreme delicacy – in terms of diplomacy and cultural understanding – it was necessary to have in dealing with ‘hot’ matters to avoid misunderstandings and subsequently tragic repercussions:

P: [...] ¿recuerda algún caso de malentendido?

A: A mí no me han pasado, pero te voy a decir una anécdota de un traductor ruso en la época de la crisis, cuando las interpretaciones eran peligrosas. Sabes que en

Cuba está la base de Guantánamo, en manos de los estadounidenses. Hubo un conflicto allá y los cubanos decidieron cortarles el agua potable que recibían de Cuba. Aquel ruso, cuando le dijeron que iban a cortar el agua, tradujo al ruso que iban a cortar ‘las aguas’. Por ‘las aguas’ entendieron los rusos el acceso marítimo, y entonces se armó un lío. Fue una mala interpretación. [...] Te puedes imaginar el conflicto. Llamaron a un hispano-soviético: “Explica eso”. Cuando se enteraron vieron que era otra cosa [...]

(Baigorri, 2000)

6.3.3 Interpreters in uniform: anecdotes by David Anderson

David Anderson is a British soldier who started to learn Russian in the 1950s after being conscripted into the Armed Forces of his country.

What follows is an account of some of David Anderson’s experiences and other events that occurred during his career in the army stretching from the mid 1950s to the mid 1990s. They all refer to interpreting Russian, but can so easily be related to the experiences of almost all military linguists, regardless of the language:

“[...] At the outset, I should point out that operating as a linguist/interpreter in a military setting comes second to one’s priority

duties as soldier, sailor or airman – be it to shoot from a rifle, steer a ship or strafe a convoy. Yet, the military interpreter is expected to be as good as any professional civilian interpreter. After all, many situations can be tense and dangerous and potentially may be detrimental to our relationships with other countries. A real mistake may lead to a complete and potentially fatal misunderstanding.

[...]

Interpreting tasks are always a challenge and working as a military interpreter can be character-building (or indeed the opposite). I recall an incident some years ago when working with three other interpreters during a five day visit of a group of Soviet Army generals to our staff college. None of us had had any previous experience of note and we had all been plucked from our normal jobs, which had nothing to do with languages or interpreting. On day two, we found ourselves on a tour of Windsor Castle and it was the turn of a young infantry major to act as interpreter. Our own chief was a major general with a reputation for being a ‘fire-eater’: he spoke no Russian, but could see when someone was struggling. Our gallant major was very rusty and clearly having a hard time at the first point on the tour. As the group moved on, our general grabbed hold of the major and, unseen by the Russians,

marched him round a corner. He grabbed the lapels of his tunic, lifted him almost six inches off the ground and threatened him with all kinds of horrible things if he didn't sort himself out.

The effect was immediate and startling. Suddenly, we had a confident and competent interpreter who hardly put a foot wrong for the remainder of the week.

[...]

The following are brief accounts of some of the experiences encountered during the years I was involved with Russian interpreters in the field of arms control. There were many incidents, some amusing and some serious, but each one enriched the depth of our knowledge and experience.

The first concerns the position of the interpreter in an arms control inspection team. He is not merely the 'lips' of the group, but an active member of the team.

I recall one icy day in Germany, finding myself in the middle of a snow-covered parade square interpreting for our chief and a general from a East European country. The general had asked to talk to us there, since there was no chance of being overheard. He then proceeded to complain that he felt we had been deceiving him. After verifying that I had heard him correctly, what followed was not only me interpreting between the two

chiefs, but also playing an active part in resolving the problem.

Similarly, I remember acting as an interpreter between a British sergeant and a Russian colonel. It was about one in the morning when the sergeant offered the colonel a 'lunch-box' containing chocolate, sandwiches and cake, etc. The Russian was offended by what he considered to be charity and while interpreting, I had to warn the sergeant (from the corner of my mouth) that the Russian was extremely upset and that the sergeant should do as requested no matter what. This turned out to involve standing to attention. Everything was eventually smoothed over and, the next morning, the colonel offered an apology to the sergeant for reacting in the way he had.

I was guilty once of, perhaps, going to far in acting as an interpreter and team member. On this occasion I was working with a British aircrew and prior to our departure from Moscow, it was necessary to file a flight-plan and obtain information on weather conditions, etc. Having helped out in such matters on previous occasions, I continued to ask questions to the Russian official in the presence of the aircraft captain without giving the latter the opportunity to ask those questions himself. He became quite angry,

feeling that I was doing his job for him and asked me to stand aside. However, he had to call me back into action within a minute or so when he realized the obvious – he spoke no Russian and had no means of communicating without me.

[...]

Invariably, interpreting tasks are extremely rewarding. One I particularly recall was helping to brief a Russian two-star air force general to prepare him for a flight in one of our two-seater training aircraft. He was an ex-MIG 29 pilot and was excited at the prospect of piloting one of our airplanes. [...] We worked out a system of communicating between the British pilot of the aircraft and the general, so that the general knew when he was able to take over control and when he was to hand it back again. On their return, the general, who had not flown for five years, was gleaming with delight and could not stop talking about the experience of the low-level flight and releasing bombs on the practice ranges felt that all my work during the two-hour briefing prior to the flight had been well worth the effort.

[...]

Acting as the ‘lips’ in a military environment is always a great challenge to one’s ability as an interpreter, one’s mental and physical stamina, and one’s sense of humor, but having dealt successfully with the

problems, the rewards are without equal²¹².”

I decided to end this chapter, and also my thesis, with the personal experience of a military interpreter told through his own words, because I believe it summarizes exactly the spirit, the courage, the dynamism of this – in most cases unrecorded – profession.

It contains the essence of its pragmatism, its improvisation, its expected and unexpected difficulties, which are far away from the common obstacles that conference interpreters find themselves to deal with, and as Anderson said, it *can be character-building or indeed the opposite*.

The risks of creating fatal misunderstandings with dramatic consequences on the one hand, and the strict and austere orders and regulations governing military lifestyle on the other, make of this profession a unique form of interpreting and, from my point of view, the most challenging of all.

²¹² Anderson, 2000.

CONCLUSIONS

The greater attention paid to more ‘common’ interpreting settings – conferences, congresses, courts, international organizations, community services, etc. – has always overshadowed the category of ‘military interpretation’.

Its secrecy and its often classified nature have never contributed to gain a higher profile for this profession, either at the academic level, or within the professional world of interpretation. The association ‘military interpreter – spy’ has, in addition, put often an aura of mistrust and suspicion over this job, making it appear as unreliable and factious.

Nevertheless, I thought it was worth giving credit to an unnoticed office which is unique, challenging, character-building, risky, and indispensable. Among the different interpretation fields mentioned above, military interpreting is definitely the one requiring a double-job. Mastery of foreign languages and knowledge of all interpretation techniques may not be a sufficient education fund for this profession. The need to act with skill in all military matters, the awareness of military hierarchy, the training and the employment as a soldier in dangerous, unstable, and adverse conditions, as well as the dominance of military lexicon and provisions are prerequisites that can not be taken for granted or acquired overnight. They all demand a solid background.

Despite the lack of literature on the subject, it is worth noting that this is one of the oldest forms of interpreting in human

history dating back to the first conquests of the Egyptians (3000 B.C.), the Greeks, and the Romans (around 400 B.C.).

For the entire ancient history, the Middle Ages, and part of modern history, military interpreting had been overlapping diplomatic interpreting. The two disciplines were the two sides of the same coin. The men who were sent alongside the Roman or the Turkish armies to communicate with the enemies or the infidels were the same that acted as ambassadors or peacemakers, resolving diplomatic disputes or reaching out for peaceful negotiations.

In the western world, the military/diplomatic interpreter's official service began to take shape in France, in the 17th century, based on the Turkish model of *dragoman*'s office.

From this moment on, thanks to the internationalization of business, politics and information, this figure acquired an increasing momentum. Yet, it was only during World War I and II that the military interpreter/linguist proved, in a definite way, his indispensable role in bridging the linguistic and cultural gap among belligerent nations.

With the example of Belgium, as pioneer in creating the first *Corps of Military Interpreters* (1914), we can understand how vital this job was in ensuring a link between different allies, as well as in providing linguistic and humanitarian assistance to the population hit by the armed conflict. Without any experience as linguists or training as interpreters, these servicemen carried out important tasks in the most challenging conditions imaginable.

With the creation of NATO, the closer relations among states, and the setting up of multi-forces Peace Support Operations, the 12 NATO founding nations (plus Germany) began independently to train and to select their own military interpreters in special military language institutes. Each country did this in accordance to its time, capacities, needs, habits and customs. As a result, Italy differs from France, and Norway from the United Kingdom, but they all share a common feature which unites them all, the selection of interpreters on the basis of the NATO STANG 6001 Language Proficiency Standard.

The modern figure of the military interpreter – in some cases substituted or assisted by civil interpreter – covers a series of activities in the framework of two main positions: as standing personnel of the general staff, and as liaisons during PSOs in ‘hot’ areas.

The former position – more institutionalized – can be mainly associated with a translator’s work. The latter, instead, reflects more the tasks of a liaison interpreter creating a communication bridge between the locals and the allied forces.

Communication is a key factor for the success of any mission. For a military interpreter, this means that a good balance of language mastery, general knowledge, and cultural open-mindedness is indispensable to guarantee a misunderstanding-free professional form of communicating.

It is difficult to offer sensible conclusions on the basis of one-off studies of this type, and especially in the absence of generous literature on the subject. However, I would like to offer the following conclusions.

One obvious one is that, although less common than conference, court, or community interpreting, military interpreting as a genre deserves to be studied more closely in view of its importance in shaping cultural understandings and aiding the cause of world peace.

From a purely academic point of view, and putting aside grand causes such as world peace and mutual understanding between cultures, I have tried to show that the military environment as interpreting assignment is subject to a fairly distinct set of constraints, rules and practices, and is therefore academically interesting as potential area of study.

It is true that the military field is often a domain of controversies; it is the firebrand in the exchange of opinions or the battlefield of ideological beliefs and political alignments. Also for these reasons it has perhaps been given a lower profile at the academic level.

As I tried to do, it is indispensable to go beyond personal ideas and look objectively at the core of the matter: military interpreting is essential for national security as well as for the success of Peace Support Operations in territories torn apart by wars. This is a fact that deserves the adequate consideration.

Besides, the interpreters employed during the two World Wars literally risked their lives, and today's military interpreters still do it according to the daily news we get from Iraq or Afghanistan. Despite any form of linguistic/cultural difficulty, what other kind of interpreter puts so much at stake?

It has been my intent to draw attention to the linguistic/communicative facet of military capability, and to give recognition to all military interpreters who lost their lives fulfilling their duty.

The honors and the commendation reserved to famous historical interpreters such as Paul Schmidt or Paul Mantoux for their great personality and intellectual skills, should be unofficially paid to all military interpreters who lost their life – and those who continue to lose it in areas like Iraq – performing their duty. Their work could never be substituted, not even with the future further developments in technology.

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**Wir über uns (Sprachausbildung,
Sprachmittlerdienst, Militärischer Anteil)**

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[WirUeberUns.php](http://www.bundessprachenamt.de/wirUeberUns/WirUeberUns.php)

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RIASSUNTO

Sconosciuta ai più, nascosta per motivi di segretezza strategica, e circondata da un velo di legittimi sospetti, la figura dell'interprete militare svolge sin dall'antichità un ruolo primario come canale di comunicazione nel quadro dei rapporti dell'istituzione Difesa di vari stati, nonché come valido supporto linguistico tra alleati e popolazione locale nello svolgersi di missioni di mantenimento della pace.

Nata e sviluppatasi come attività diplomatica durante le prime conquiste egizie (3000 a.C.), l'interpretazione militare vanta le referenze più antiche dal momento che tutti i grandi conquistatori si sono avvalsi di un fidato linguista nelle proprie invasioni.

Sulla falsa riga della Turchia, la Francia è la prima nazione occidentale ad istituzionalizzare questa figura creando delle scuole ad hoc per la sua formazione (XVII secolo).

Ma saranno le due guerre mondiali a consacrare il ruolo indispensabile dell'interprete militare nell'esercito e nella diplomazia internazionale.

La nascita della NATO, di partenariati strategici, di missioni congiunte di peace-keeping sotto l'egida o meno dell'ONU, creano le condizioni necessarie per l'avvio di un'accurata selezione e formazione degli interpreti in ambito militare.

I 12 stati fondatori della NATO (unitamente alla Germania) si organizzano distintamente per dare una preparazione adeguata ai propri militari.

Ma la conoscenza linguistica non basta. Questo lavoro richiede una particolare padronanza del lessico militare, capacità

comunicative, una buona cultura generale, e non per ultimo sangue freddo e coraggio. Le condizioni di operatività possono andare da una posizione di traduttore/linguista presso lo stato maggiore, all'assegnazione ad una missione di pace all'estero come interprete. L'interprete militare è anzitutto un soldato, e pertanto è tenuto ad ubbidire agli ordini e al suo codice di condotta.

Diversi sono stati gli interpreti militari passati alla storia per aver lavorato a fianco di personaggi come Hitler, Stalin, Churchill, Wilson. Tra questi Paul Schmidt, Valentin Berezhev, Paul Mantoux, Jean Herbert. Tutti riconosciuti per la loro professionalità, intelligenza e carisma.

Accanto a questi nomi noti, molti sono anche coloro che senza riconoscimenti ufficiali hanno dato prova di coraggio e di valenza intellettuale in momenti difficili.

RESUMEN

Desconocida para muchos, escondida por razones de confidencialidad estratégica, y rodeada por un manto de sospechas fundadas, la figura del intérprete militar lleva desempeñando desde la antigüedad un papel de relieve como cauce de comunicación en las relaciones internacionales del ámbito de Defensa de cada Estado, y como eficaz instrumento de mediación lingüística entre fuerzas aliadas y población local a lo largo de misiones de mantenimiento de la paz.

Nacida y desarrollada como actividad diplomática durante las primeras conquistas egipcias, (3000 a.C.) la interpretación militar puede preciarse de las referencias más antiguas, ya que todos los grandes conquistadores empleaban fiables lingüistas en sus invasiones.

Siguiendo el ejemplo de Turquía, Francia es la primera nación occidental a oficializar esta figura creando escuelas especializadas para su formación (siglo XVII).

Serán, sin embargo, las dos grandes guerras a poner de relieve esta profesión de una manera definitiva y a entregar el indispensable papel del intérprete militar al ejército y a la diplomacia internacional.

La creación de la OTAN, de relaciones estratégicas entre estados, de misiones unidas de mantenimiento de la paz, al amparo o no de la ONU, dan vida a las condiciones necesarias para poner en marcha una selección esmerada y una capacitación adecuada de intérpretes en el sector militar.

Los 12 estados fundadores de la OTAN (más Alemania), se organizan de manera distinta para brindar un apropiado entrenamiento a sus militares.

Pero el conocimiento del idioma no es suficiente. Esta profesión necesita un peculiar dominio del léxico militar, capacidad de comunicación, una buena cultura general, además de sangre fría y valor. Las condiciones de trabajo pueden ir desde una posición como traductor/lingüista en el Estado Mayor, hasta la asignación a una misión de paz en el extranjero como intérprete.

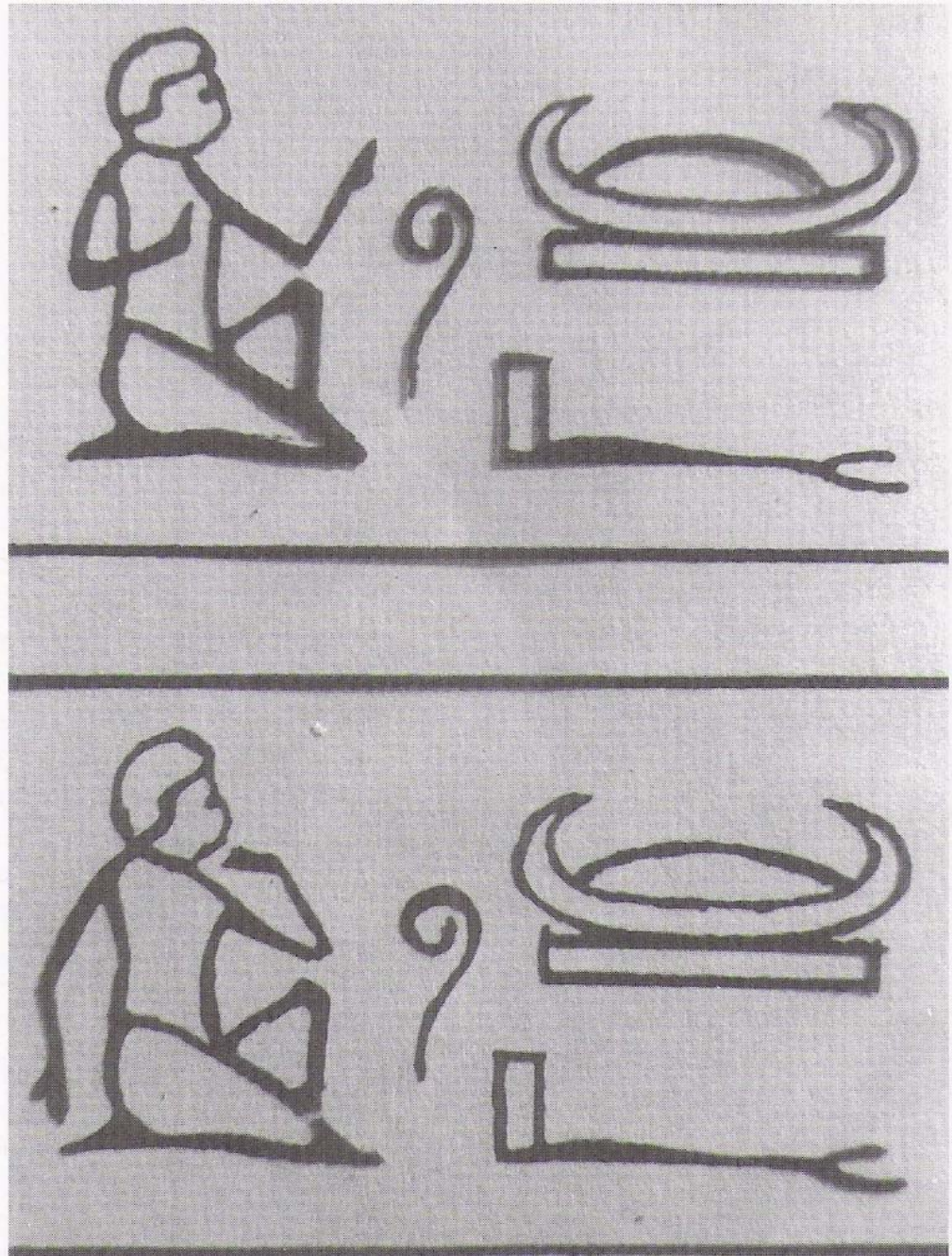
El intérprete militar es antes de todo un soldado, con órdenes y códigos de conducta que respetar.

Muchos han sido los intérpretes militares que han pasado a la historia por trabajar al lado de personajes como Hitler, Stalin, Churchill, Wilson, etc. Entre ellos, Paul Schmidt, Valentine Berezikov, Paul Mantoux, Jean Herbert. Personas de gran profesionalidad, inteligencia y carisma.

Juntos a estos nombres famosos, hay muchos otros, que sin reconocimientos formales han demostrado valor y riqueza intelectual en condiciones difíciles.

APPENDIX

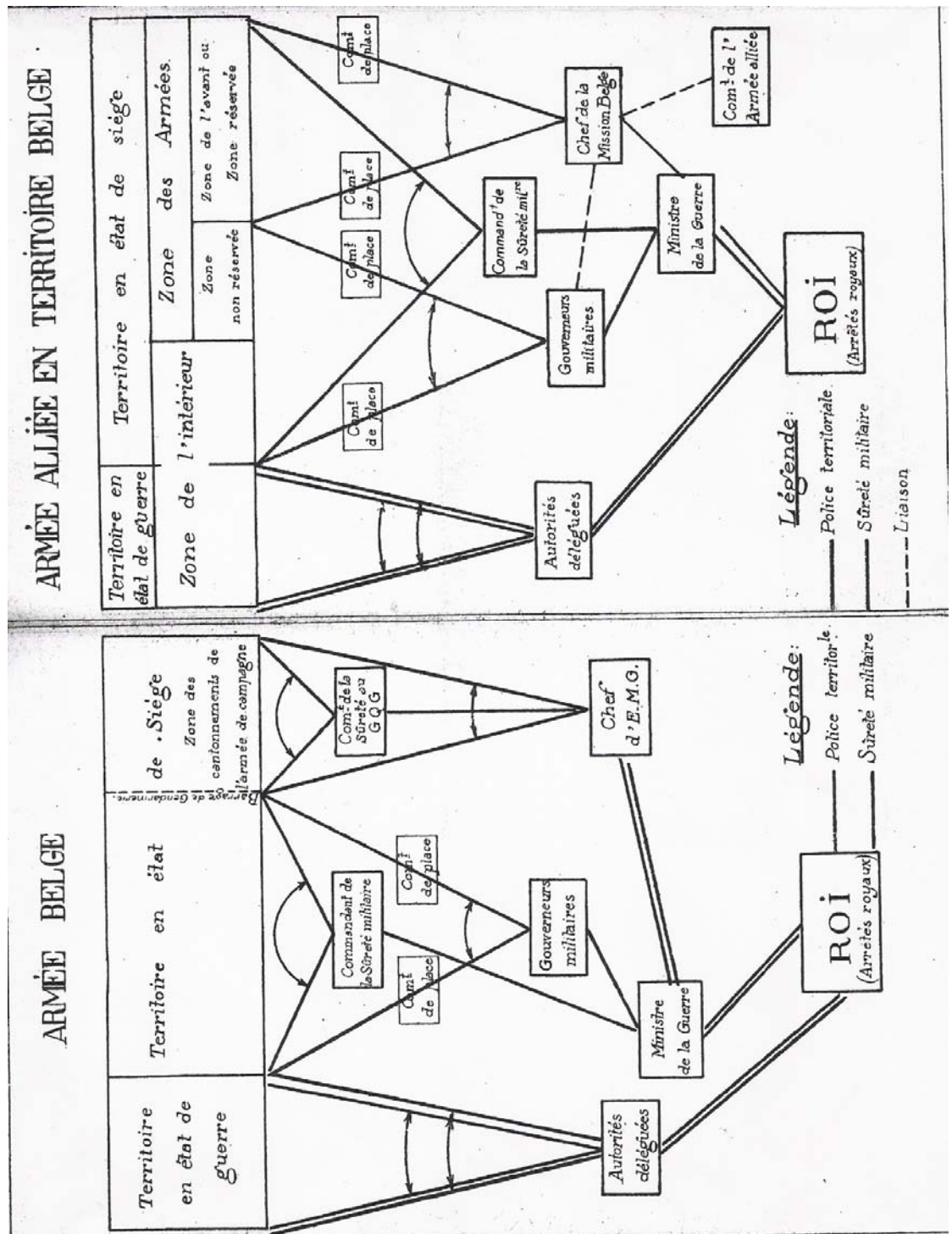
APPENDIX 1



213

²¹³ Hieroglyphic depicting interpreting. This Cartouche, which should be read from top to bottom and from right to left, shows a seated man, a coil of rope, a fisherman's boat with net and an outstretched forearm. The cartouche is double because it signifies the interpreter receiving a message in a foreign tongue and then repeating it in another language (Delisle & Woodsworth, 1995: 287).

APPENDIX 2



2

APPENDIX 3

² Organization of Allied Forces on Belgian territory during World War I.



3

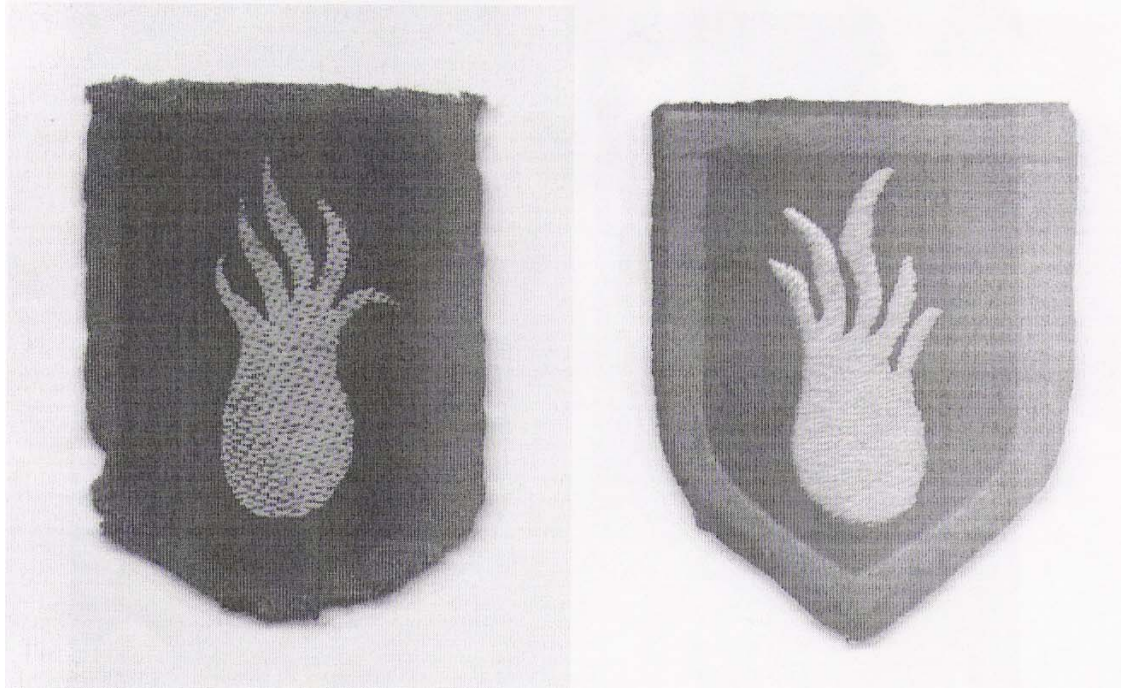
APPENDIX 4

³ Battle Dress blouse of Belgian military interpreters during World War I and II.

Woven version

version

Embroidered



4

⁴ Formation badges of the Belgian Corps of Military Interpreters during World War I and II.

APPENDIX 5

FICHE N° II/E/33

CORPS DES INTERPRETES

Lt-Col. de Sellier de Moranville

Cie ADMINISTRATIVE DES INTERPRETES.

Ct de Jamblin de Neux

- 28-11-44 Création du Corps des Interprètes par Arrêté du Régent n° 44 Voir D.M. lère Don. n° org/4481 du 23-12-44 - farde I.G.T. et T.Armée
- 28-12-44 La Cie Administrative des interprètes est créée à Tervueren, Caserne Ct Pauquin D.M. lère Don. n° org/4481 du 23-12-44 - farde I.G.T. Ct T.Armée.
Mission : Prendre en force, habiller, équiper et administrer les interprètes commissionnés en vertu de l'arrêté du Régent n° 44 créant le Corps des Interprètes en date du 21-11-44. Dès que les interprètes auront été commissionnés au rang de sous-officier ou d'officier subalterne et seront passés par le S.P.M. à la Cie Administrative qui les prendra en force par fractions de 20 environ à la fois.
Ils seront habillés et équipés et subiront pendant 3 jours une courte période d'instruction militaire. Un officier britannique s'occupera de leur formation spéciale d'interprète.
Les équipements seront fournis par le 21e Groupe d'Armée.
Les interprètes seront ensuite désignés pour remplir des fonctions auprès des unités alliées suivant indication du 11e Groupe d'Armée ou du Lt-Col. de Sellier de Moranville
- 23-4-45 Relève du Ct des T.Armée D.M. I.C.F. lère Don. n° org/13136 du 10-4-45 - farde CMAIF
- 30-11-45 La Cie administrative du Corps des Interprètes est dissoute; il est administré par la Cie administrative du Service de liaison militaire belge. D.M. S.M.G. Ser B. n° 0/259 du 2-11-45 - farde 016 arch

CORPS DES INTERPRETES

Cie ADMINISTRATIVE DES INTERPRETES.

1-12-45	La D.M. du 1-12-45 modifiant la D.M. E.M.G. Son B. n° 0/2630 D.M. 0/25947 du 6-11-45 supprime du 1-12-45 - farde 026 arch. ce qui a trait au Corps des Inter- prètes qui ne fait donc plus partie du S.E.M.B.
27-12-45	La D.M. du 27-12-45 modifie à nou- D.M. E.M.G. Son B. n° III/0/ veau le D.M. 0/25497 du 6-11-45 et 27584 du 27-12-45 - farde maintient le corps des interprètes 026 archives. uniquement en ce qui concerne son activité au profit d'autorités bri- tanniques jusqu'au 8-5-46
8-5-46	Remise à la disposition des auto- E.M.G. Son B. n° II/0/3822 rités belges du 8-5-46 - farde I.G.T. Ct T.Armée
10-5-46	<u>DISSOUS.</u> idem

⁵ File of creation and disbandment of the second Belgian Corps of Military Interpreters.

LISTE
DES
Interprètes Belges (Officiers et Sous-Officiers)
attachés à l'Armée anglaise
pendant les Campagnes 1915, 16 et 17
(d'après la liste établie à la Mission belge
au G. Q. G. britannique le 1^{er} Mai 1917)

Absil GHISLAIN.	René DELAY.
Léon AERTS.	Fernand DELMAY.
Marcel ANTHONY.	Fernand DE BLAUW.
Lionel ANSPACH.	DE JAER.
Henri ANSPACH.	Camille DE CEULENEER.
Alphonse BAKELANTS.	Paul DE CONINCK.
Charles BOEREBOOM.	Charles DE CRANE.
Pierre BOGAERTS.	Adalbert DE RYCKMAN.
François BOON.	David DE COENE.
Josse BORGINON.	Max DE LALAING.
Ernest BOSMANS.	René DE MOT.
Charles BRACQ.	Robert DELMOTTE.
René BOSSIER.	Jacques DELMOTTE.
Albert BOUX.	Maurice DE REYGHÈRE.
Robert BLOCK.	Ludovic DECKERS.
Prosper CAPPELEN.	Comte Charles DE HEMRI-
Nestor COLLINET.	COURT DE GRUNNE.
Joseph CONRAD.	Baron Raymond DE VINCK.
Constant CLOQUET.	Richard DRORY.
Charles DANCKAERT.	Jean DUPONT.
Sadi DAVIGNON.	Philippe DE WITTE.
Adolphe DE BUSSCHERE.	DE WATINE.
Baron Jean DE CONINCK.	Henry ELTZES.
Jérôme DE HAECK.	Marcel FAVRESSE.
Maurice DE HASQUE.	Robert FESTER.
Paul DE GRAVE.	Louis FYNAUT.
Maurice DE GRAVE.	Philippe FELICE.
Maurice DE JENGHE.	Gustave FIVÉ.
Henri DE KOCK.	Georges FANNING.
Théophile DE LANTSHEERE.	Robert FARIN.
Adolphe DE MAN.	Paul GILLAU.
Henri DE MAN.	Charles GUIETTE.
Albert DE MARNEFFE.	Léon GOOSSENS.
Joë DE PRET-ROOSE DE	Guillaume GOETHARS.
CALESBERG.	Georges GOFFART.
Prince DE CROY.	Germain GOLINVAUX.
Comte DE LIEDEKERKE.	Louis GRISAR.

Léon GYSSELS.
 Aubert GUSTIN.
 Stéphan HALOT.
 Adrien HEGMANS.
 Norbert HAELTERS.
 Lionel HANZE.
 Joé HERRY.
 Emmanuel HILLEBRANT.
 Emmanuel HOBHEN.
 Raoul HOORNAERT.
 Jacobs GUILLAUME.
 Georges JOORIS.
 Albert KLEIST.
 Robert KREGLINGER.
 Louis LANTZIUS.
 Henri LAVALETTE.
 Paul LE BLON.
 Eugène LAUREYSSENS.
 Harold LAIRENS.
 Georges LENDERS.
 Léon JACQUES.
 Charles LEJEUR.
 Jean LOORE.
 Georges LOPPENS.
 Willy LOPPENS.
 Maurice LYSÉN.
 LIÉNAERT.
 Maurice MEEUS.
 Joseph MEERBERGEN.
 Henri MIN.
 Etienne MINNE.
 Marcel MINGERS.
 Maurice MOGIN.
 Léon MOREL.
 Louis MULLE DE TERSCHUE-
 REN.
 Julien MOLITOR.
 Henri MEERMANS.
 Camille MUYSHONDT.
 Lucien MOSTAERT.
 Georges MORÉAU.
 Louis MONTHOYE.
 Eugène NAGEL.
 Ludovic NÈVE.
 Alphonse NIETVELT.
 John NIEWENHUIS.
 Vicomte Alain OBERT DE
 THIEUSES.
 Jules PATTYN.
 Raoul PIRMEZ.
 Max POLCHET.
 Léopold RENWART.
 Léon RIGOLE.
 Jean ROEYKENS.
 Joseph ROSCI.
 Georges ROELS.
 Lucien SCHELSTRAETE.
 Camille SEMINCK.
 Adolphe SIMONET.
 Georges SMETS.
 Georges STEINMANN.
 Albert STARMANS.
 Joseph TIMMERMANS.
 Léon TOM.
 François VAN BOCKEL.
 René VAN DAMME.
 Henri VAN DEN BEMDEN.
 Maurice VAN DEN BEMDEN.
 Norbert VERBRUGGEN.
 Camille VAN DEN HEUVEL.
 Auguste VAN MERRIS.
 Adéodat VAN DEN KERC-
 KHOVE.
 Marcel VAN DE PUTTE.
 Jean VAN DER LINDEN.
 Guillaume VAN NOYEN.
 Armand VAN DER NOOT.
 Gustave VAN DER SLUYS.
 Robert VAN DE WEYGAERT.
 Emile VAN LOO.
 Maxime VAN MOSSEVELDE.
 André VAN NEDERGHEN.
 Pierre VAN OOST.
 Joseph VAN OPSTAL.
 Paul VAN REMOORTELE.
 Albert VAN ZUYLEN DE NIE-
 VELT.
 Alfred VELDEMAN.
 Julien VERBAUWHÉDE.
 Maurice VERFAILLIE.
 Fernand VERHOUSTRAETEN.
 Alphonse VERMEERSCH.
 Eugène VERSTRAETE.
 Jacques VISSCHERS.
 Georges VINGERHOETS.
 Georges VAN HISSENHOVEN.
 Jean VERHOUSTRAETEN.
 Julien ZONDERVAN.
 Guillaume WILLEM.

⁶ List of Belgian military interpreters assigned to the British Army during the 1915, 1916, 1917 campaigns.

APPENDIX 7

LISTE

DES

*Officiers et Sous-Officiers Interprètes décorés au cours
des Campagnes 1915-16-17-18, au front anglais*

S/l ^t Joseph DE PRET-ROOSE (blessé)	{ Military Cross Croix de guerre belge	13 août 1916 1 ^{er} novembre 1918
S/l ^t Georges RËLS		13 août 1916
L ^t Albert KLEIST	Military Cross	—
S/l ^t Louis GRISAR	Military Cross	—
S/l ^t C ^{te} Charles DE HEMRI- COURT DE GRUNNE	{ Military Cross	—
S/l ^t Henri DE MAN	Military Cross	—
S/l ^t Jean VAN DER LINDEN (blessé)	{ Military Cross Croix de guerre	— septembre 1918
S/l ^t Baron Raymond DE VYNCK (blessé)	{ Croix de Chevalier de l'Orde de la Couronne Military Cross Croix de guerre belge	29 août 1915 13 août 1916 29 février 1916
S/l ^t Jules PATTYN	Military Cross	28 mars 1918
S/l ^t P ^{ce} DE CROY-SOLRE	Military Cross	13 août 1916
L ^t Guillaume VAN NOYEN	Military Cross	28 mars 1917
S/l ^t Constant CLOQUET	{ Military Cross Croix de guerre française	— 30 mars 1918

1 ^{er} serg ^t Robert BLOCK (tué à l'ennemi)	{ Croix de Chevalier de l'Orde de Léopold II Croix de guerre belge	21 janvier 1916
— François BEYLEN (tué à l'ennemi)	{ Croix de Chevalier de l'Orde de Léopold II Croix de guerre belge	30 novembre 1917
— Julien REMOUCHAMPS (tué à l'ennemi)	{ Croix de Chevalier de l'Orde de Léopold II Croix de guerre belge	—

1 ^{er} serg ^t DE WATTINE (tué à l'ennemi)	{ Croix de Chevalier de l'Ordre de Léopold II Croix de guerre }	avril 1918
— René VAN DAMME (tué à l'ennemi)	{ Distinguished Conduct Medal Croix de Chevalier de l'Ordre de Léopold II Croix de guerre }	23 août 1916 octobre 1918
— Léon GYSSELS (deux fois blessé)	{ Military Cross }	3 août 1917
— Henri ANSPACH (blessé)	{ Croix de St-Georges de 2 ^e classe Croix de guerre belge }	20 février 1915 29 février 1916
— Guillaume GÆTHALS (blessé)	{ Décoration militaire de 2 ^e classe Croix de guerre belge }	24 avril 1917
— Emmanuel HOBHEN (blessé)	{ Décoration militaire de 2 ^e classe Croix de guerre belge }	29 août 1915 29 février 1916
— William JACOBS (blessé)	{ Croix de guerre belge }	10 août 1916
— Robert FARIN	{ Distinguished Conduct Medal }	23 août 1916
— Maurice DE HASQUE (blessé)	{ — }	—
— Henri LA VALETTE	{ — }	—
— Robert FOSTER	{ — }	—
— Charles BRACQ	{ — }	—
— Marcel FAVRESSE (deux fois blessé)	{ — }	28 mars 1918
— Albert GUSTIN (blessé)	{ — }	—
— Emile VAN LOO	{ — }	—
— Léon AERTS	{ — }	—
— Eugène NAGEL	{ — }	23 août 1916
— Joseph TIMMERMANS	{ — }	—
— Robert KREGLINGER	{ — }	—
— Joseph CONRARD	{ — }	—
— Etienne MINNE	{ — }	—

1 ^{er} serg ^t François VAN BOCKEL	{ Distinguished Conduct Medal	23 août 1916
— David DE CÈNE	—	—
— Willy LOPPENS	—	—
— Georges STEIMAN	{ Military Medal	28 mars 1918
	{ Croix de guerre belge	15 juillet 1918
— Georges LOPPENS	Military Medal	28 mars 1918
— Richard DRORY	—	—
— C ^{ts} DE LIEDEKERKE	{ Distinguished Conduct Medal	23 août 1916
— Louis LANTZIUS	—	—
— Charles DANCKAERT	—	—
— Alphonse BACKELANS	—	28 mars 1918
— José SMET (blessé)	{ Military Medal	27 octobre 1918
	{ Croix de guerre belge	—
— DE JAER (blessé)	{ Croix de guerre belge	—
— Georges BORGINON	{ Distinguished Conduct Medal	23 août 1916
— Raoul HOORNAERT	—	—
— René BOSSIER	—	—
— Julien MOLITOR	—	—
— Nestor HAELTERS	—	—
— Lionel ANSPACH	—	—
— Philippe DE WITTE	—	—
— Joseph MERRBERGEN	—	—
— Jos. HERRY	{ Distinguished Conduct Medal	23 août 1916
	{ Croix de guerre belge	mars 1918
— Comte Max DE LALAING	{ Distinguished Conduct Medal	février 1918
— Jacques LÉON	Croix de guerre belge	mai 1918

APPENDIX 8

⁷ List of decorated Belgian military interpreters who distinguished themselves during the 1915, 1916, 1917 campaigns.

RELEVÉ

DE

certaines Citations accordées à des Officiers et S.-Officiers

Interprètes par l'Armée Britannique

(Relevé à la Mission Belge, le 1^{er} Mars 1918)

N O M S	CITATIONS
1 ^{er} maréchal des logis Robert FARIN	Has done very good work as interpreter at the Headquarters of an Infantry Brigade. He is always anxious for work connected with the trenches and was useful for liaison when his brigade was working with the Belgian Artillery.
1 ^{er} sergent Louis LANTZIUS	Has done excellent work as interpreter. Not only is he keen and energetic in carrying out instructions but has on occasions helped the work with most valuable suggestions.
1 ^{er} maréchal des logis Eugène NAGEL	Since June 1915 was attached to the British Army as interpreter, being present during numerous bombardments of Ypres, where he was twice buried by shell explosions. He was always displayed excellent ability, tact and initiative and his services have been of very material assistance.
1 ^{er} maréchal des logis Joseph TIMMERMANS	Was attached to the British Army in Armentières. He worked hard and carried out his difficult duties with great ability.
1 ^{er} sergent Josse BORGIGNON	Was attached as interpreter since August 1915 to the 2nd. Army Intelligence Office at Poperinghe. Has done exceptionally good work not only as interpreter but as personal assistant to the Officer in charge at Poperinghe.

1^{er} sergent
Raoul HOORNAERT

From his grasp of the requirements of a situation, his legal knowledge and his method of treating all classes of inhabitants, has always secured the best results. He has always been untrring in his efforts.

1^{er} sergent
Robert KREGLINGER

A most capable interpreter who has done excellent work. He is always ready to help in every possible way.

1^{er} sergente
A.-C. BRACQ

This interpreter was attached to the 49th (W. R.) Division for six months while holding the line north of Ypres. His work consisted in keeping in close touch with the French Artillery, which during many bombardments was extremely important as well as confidential. It many times necessitated his visiting the French along the shell swept roads. Has rendered very valuable services.

S/Lieutenant
George ROELS

Was appointed Belgian Interpreter Officer to 1st Canadian Division, 5 th July 1915 and has shown at all times excellent tact and judgement in dealing with questions arising between civilians and soldiers. His duties have been most satisfactorily performed.

1^{er} sergent
Joseph CONRAD

Since joining the 1st Canadian Division in July 1915 the work of this N. C. O. as Belgian Interpreter has been consistently good. He has done much to maintain the friendliest feelings between the civilians and the Canadians.

1^{er} sergent
Maurice DE HASQUE

Has been in charge of civilian labour for the past 18 months and joined the R. E. of the 6th. Division on June the 1st 1916. Since the latter date he has been frequently under heavy shell fire at Wlamertighe and Ypres, and has always rendered the most valuable services to the British troops. He behaved himself in a very galant way during the first gas attack at Ypres on the 22nd. and 30th. April 1915 and has been mentioned twice by his British commanding officers.

1^{er} sergent
Robert FESTER

Has done very good and useful work as interpreter F. A. 47th. Brigade since June 1915. His work was always carried out with accuracy, judgement and unfailing tact. He always did most useful work in helping with the liaison

1^{er} sergent
N. HAELTERS

with the French Artillery 75 m/m group. He has always been most anxious to help in every way.

Constant and unremitting devotion to duty. He was attached to officer ic Roads, II Corps, his services in connection with the large working parties of civilians were invaluable.

1^{er} maréchal des logis
Etienne MINNE

Was employed as interpreter at Headquarters 14th. Division during the period in which the Division was located in the Ypres saillant. He performed his duties with tact and efficiency and gave great assistance to the Provost Marshall.

1^{er} sergent
René VAN DAMME

Acted as interpreter to Royal Engineers 14th. since June 1915, and was of the greatest possible assistance in every respect.

1^{er} sergent
François VAN BOCKEL

Has always shown application and zeal. Previous to his attachment to 50th. Division he did excellent work with the 46th. and 9th. Divisions.

Sous-lieutenant
Jean VANDERLINDEN

This officer has been with the British Army since February 1915. He is an extremely hard working and capable officer and has been of the greatest assistance to the Staff of the Divisions. He has often assisted the G.S.O. 3 in intelligence work. He carried out all his duties with the greatest tact and careful cheerfulness. He has been previously strongly recommended for reward by the G.O.C. 28th. Division for his courage and devotion to duty on many occasions, particularly on May 2nd. and 22nd. 1915 during the second battle of Ypres; but received no reward. I strongly recommend that his services to the British Armies should now be recognized.

Sous-lieutenant
H. DE MAN

Has been attached to the British Army as Belgian Interpreter Officer since May 1915 during which period he has carried out his duties in a markedly tactful manner. He is a most conscientious, keen, energetic officer, ready for any work at all times and has been most helpful in every way.

Sous-lieutenant
Joseph DE PRET ROOSE
DE CALESBERGH

Has done general good work since joining his Division in February 1915. He spares himself no trouble and deals with all questions referred to him with tact and sound common sense. His services have been most valuable to the Division.

Sous-lieutenant
Louis GRISAR

Has been with this Division for upwards of eleven months. He is always cheerful and ready to assist in every possible way to provide for the comfort of the troops and to smooth over difficulties that may arise.

Sous-lieutenant
Charles Comte
HEMERICOURT
DE GRUNNE

Rendered valuable services with much tact and discretion in all negotiations between the British Army and the Belgian authorities and materially assisted in the satisfactory settlement of all claims.

Lieutenant
Albert-Louis-Gustave
KLEIST

Attached to British Army 1st. of March 1915. His services have been at all times highly satisfactory he has been indefatigable in his duties to the Division Staff in their dealings with all questions affecting the local inhabitants.

⁸ List of commendations to Belgian military interpreters who distinguished themselves the most by their devotion to duty among the British troops (1915, 1916, 1917 campaigns).

APPENDIX 9

Example n.1 – Speech²¹⁴

[...] Le mie vogliono essere considerazioni riferite più alla politica degli armamenti, che rappresenta la parte più prettamente istituzionale. Non per questo mi esimerò dal fare alcune considerazioni che riguardano la riorganizzazione della nostra base industriale per la difesa. Credo che oggi ci sia ancora più di prima, ancorché spero ci sia sempre stata, la consapevolezza che la componente industriale per la difesa è una componente importante di una qualunque strategia nazionale, di una qualunque strategia in materia di sicurezza e difesa. Non si può pensare a una politica di sicurezza e difesa – sia nazionale che multinazionale, o più auspicabilmente nel contesto europeo – senza ritenere che questa componente debba essere sostenuta da un'industria della difesa adeguata alle esigenze operative [...]

Example n.2 – Technical list²¹⁵

DOTAZIONE NBC DI COMPAGNIA

- *n.5 dosimetri tattici completi di borsa custodia M64;*
- *n.10 dosimetri di contaminazione M65;*

²¹⁴ Example 1: Part of speech given by Giampaolo Di Paola, National Secretary of Defense and Director General of the Armaments, on March 11, 2003.

²¹⁵ Example 2: Example taken from the Permanent Provisions of the Italian Defense NBC, Ed.2001, unclassified publication.

- *n.1 dosimetro gamma-neutronico;*
- *n.1 lettore per dosimetri gamma-neutronici;*
- *n.1 intensimetro di contaminazione completo di borsa custodia;*
- *n.1 cassetta campale per la rilevazione di aggressivi chimici (RAC/83) e relativa cassetta materiali di riserva contenente:*
 - *n.1 pompa di rilevazione*
 - *n.11 flaconi stillagocce posti in rastrelliera;*
 - *n.30 piastrine di prelievo;*
 - *n.20 tamponcini di cotone;*
 - *n.7 ditali di alluminio per prelievo;*
 - *n.1 torcia elettrica;*
 - *n.1 supporto ribaltabile con tabella sistematica di rilevazione;*
 - *[...]*

Example n.3 – Order²¹⁶

1. SITUAZIONE

I risultati sinora raggiunti confermano la validità delle linee di azione intraprese ed impongono di sistematizzare ed ottimizzare il loro sviluppo.

2. OBIETTIVO PER LA F.A.

²¹⁶ Example 3: Example taken from the Permanent Provisions of the Italian Defense NBC, Ed.2001, unclassified publication.

Procedere, in ambito nazionale e multinazionale, all'aggiornamento continuo e sistematico delle procedure d'impiego in vigore, predisponendo al termine delle attività in Teatro debriefing essenzialmente propositivi.

3. *COMPITO*

- a. *Modalità esecutive: quelle indicate nella lettera in riferimento.*
- b. *Modalità per il coordinamento: da concordare.*
- c. *Scadenza invio della documentazione: quella indicata nella lettera in riferimento.*

4. *RIFERIMENTI*

Omissis

APPENDIX 10

Saint-Jean School History

Language training in the Canadian Forces (CF) can be traced back to the years following the Second World War. The Royal Canadian Air Force School of English, initially located in Trenton, moved to Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu on April 2, 1951. Prior to unification, the three elements of the CF offered language courses at various locations. In 1966 and 1967, it was decided to amalgamate all language training in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, to abolish the RCAF School of English, and to replace it with the name Canadian Forces Language School.

The School in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu continued to offer language training to Francophones. In 1968, Anglophone personnel in the CF were offered French courses. With the unification of the Forces, it became advantageous to know a second language to enhance careers and chances for a promotion.

As well as teaching languages, Saint-Jean had, in 1968, a testing section whose mandate was to develop and administer tests in both languages in order to determine the students' level of bilingualism. During the following years, always with the intention of improving the quality of instruction in the two official languages, the School created another section, that of Curriculum Development.

In 1971 the Public Service Commission was given the mandate to hire and train the teaching staff and oversee the pedagogical aspect of the School. In 1978, however, the responsibility for teaching staff, curriculum and testing reverted to the Department of National Defense.

In 1995 the first group of foreign national students arrived at CFLS Saint-Jean Detachment as part of the Military Training Assistance Program (MTAP).

In 2001, a total of 121 students from 4 countries attended English Language Training and 92 from 13 countries attended French language training.

Saint-Jean Learning Environment

All language training conducted by the Language School is based on the Standardization NATO Agreement (STANAG 6001) defining the level of language to be maintained.

Classes are taught by both male and female civilian teachers. They represent the Canadian Armed Forces and are entitled to the same respect as military officers.

The method used at the Language School is not a typical grammar-based program but a communicative approach. This amalgamates all skills via various types of activities and role-playing scenarios to simulate real-life situations. The communicative method has proven successful, as it results in students being able to communicate very quickly and effectively.

All classes are made up of students with similar language abilities, regardless of rank and country of origin.

The English and French course consists of 6 classes of instruction per day. Homework is assigned daily for completion in the evening. Classrooms are equipped with modern audio-visual equipment.

At the beginning of the course, candidates are administered a placement test to determine class composition. Final testing will take place during the last two weeks of the course to determine each student's English language profile in accordance with STANAG 6001.

Classroom teachers write progress reports for each student midway in the course and at the end of the course. All students will have the content of their individual report explained to them in detail prior to signing it.

To learn the language effectively, one must be aware of cultural differences. To address this aspect, one integral part of the language training program is the social-cultural visits to Quebec City, Bagotville, Trenton, Kingston, Ottawa and local areas of interest.

Socio-cultural trips/activities are an integral component of the language course. As well as providing opportunities for students to experience Canadian culture, these trips and activities give students a chance to practice their language skills in real-life situations.

Language proficiency is assessed at the end of the MTAP Language Training Program. Each student is assigned a language profile that indicates his/her language proficiency in

each of the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing).

Borden History

The enactment of the Official Languages Act of 1968 prompted the Department of National Defense (DND) to give more impetus to language training in the CF. The escalating demand for language training overtaxed the facility of l'Ecole des Langues des Forces Canadiennes at Canadian Forces Base Saint-Jean.

In July 1972 the English Language Training Unit (ELTU) was founded. Located at Canadian Forces Base Borden, its first students arrived in September of that year.

Initially regarded as a temporary measure, pending the construction of expanded facilities at Canadian Forces Base Saint-Jean, the ELTU was soon recognized for its efficient and effective training of Francophones, in part because of the ELTU's location in an Anglophone environment.

In August 1990, and as part of a general decentralization of functions and responsibilities relating to language training, CFLS Borden was mandated to design, distribute, and maintain on a national basis DND's English-language curricula and tests.

In January 1993, the clientele for English-language training at CFLS Borden started coming from a number of European nations under the auspices of the Military Training Assistance Program (MTAP) and the Partnership for Peace Program (PfP). These students consisted of military officers and senior civilian employees from Ministries of Defense of various countries.

The following countries were invited to send students: Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovak Republic, and Ukraine. A total of 30 students made up the course load. Courses were 20 week in duration and ran from January to June and July to December.

In 1995, four new countries were invited to send students: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Romania. The number of students was also increased to a total of 60 students.

In July 1998, five new countries were also invited to send students. The following three nations were invited under the auspices of the MTAP and the PfP: Bulgaria, Russia, and Slovenia. The following two Asian nations were invited under the auspices of MTAP: Korea and Thailand. These two nations were not PfP nations. The number of students was also increased to a total of 75 students.

In July 1999, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia was also invited to send students. Albania was invited to attend starting in 2000, and Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan joined the program in 2003.

National Capital Region School History

The teaching of languages in the Canadian Forces is steeped in history. Formed during World War II in Vancouver, British Columbia, the first Canadian military language school, named “S-20 Japanese Language School” graduated, during the short period of its existence from January 1944 to July 1946, 225 officers and other military personnel.

In December of 1950, a small Russian language training program operated with selected personnel, under the sponsorship of the Directorate of Air Intelligence. Known as

“RCAF Russian Language School”, it was successively located at the Carleton College, the Beaver Barracks, and on Victoria Island in Ottawa. This school trained 25 officers and Non Commissioned-Officers (NCOs) from the RCAF while the two other services, Army and Navy, trained their personnel respectively in the USA and Great Britain.

Effective on September 1, 1955, the School was officially activated and renamed “Tri-Services Russian Language School” (TSRLS), as it began training personnel not only from the Air Forces but also from the Army, Navy and other government departments. A total of 150 military and civilian personnel were trained under TSRLS. In August of 1960, for the first time a new course for Polish Attaché designates was introduced. This set a precedent for other foreign language courses to follow.

In 1961, the School was re-designated as the “Joint Services Language School” and moved from Victoria Island to Eastview, Ontario. Gradually, JSLS began to expand by offering language courses other than Russian and Polish, thus including training for all Attaché designates and Foreign Service Officers of other government departments and agencies.

Following the integration of the three military services, the School was again given a new name in 1967, the “Canadian Forces Foreign Language School” and became a unit of Training Command for the first time after being previously attached to the Air Defense Command.

In September of 1977, following the re-organization of DND training requirements, CFFLS was approached with the possibility of amalgamating French Language Training (military) with that of the Canadian Forces Foreign Language School. Upon completion of this amalgamation, the school was relocated to Ottawa in order to accommodate its expanded training role.

In November of 1983, the unit crest was approved, the School motto “PER LINGUAS COMMUNITAS” translates literally as “SOCIETY THROUGH LANGUAGE” and can be interpreted as the goal to promote universal understanding and cooperation through language.

Over 27 foreign languages and dialects could now be offered. The courses were tailored to meet the individual needs and availability of the student. The course content evolved from a stimulus/response, grammar/translation to a more communicative approach, reflecting real-life situations for the military member.

Computer-assisted learning also became an integral part of language training both for French and foreign languages. Foreign language survival booklets were prepared for Canadian troops serving in peacekeeping missions.

As a result of the merger of the three language schools in the Canadian Forces in 1999, the Canadian Forces Language School Ottawa is now known as the National Capital Region Company.

The NCR Company became a part of the Military Training Assistance Program when they began offering the Teacher

Training Program to teachers coming from countries that are either members of NATO or participating in the Partnership for Peace program.

NCR Learning Environment

NCR provides for different language courses, namely:

- 3) Language Teacher Training Course (LTTC)
- 4) Foreign Language Course
- 5) French and English Second Language Course
- 6) Continuous Superior Level Course (CSLC)

The **Language Teacher Training Course** is aimed at training language teachers to teach English using the Communicative Approach to their own personnel making them NATO operable; at familiarizing the language teachers with the Canadian Forces and Canadian culture; and at increasing their English proficiency.

Emphasis shall be put on teaching the four language skills in a military context, in the use of multimedia to support the learning process, and in the evaluation of the acquisition of the language.

A STANAG 6001 Level 3 linguistic profile in Speaking and a Level 3 in one of other skills is required in order to follow the course. A candidate who does not meet the minimum requirement will be subject to a Progress Review Board in order to determine whether or not he/she is to remain on the course.

A screening test will be administered by the training establishment at the beginning of the course.

The Course – which is conducted over a 17 week period, with 6 hours of training per day – shall include:

- a. methodological teaching techniques;
- b. a practicum;
- c. socio-cultural activities;
- d. a total immersion program; and
- e. administrative and testing days.

The assessment of candidates is to determine whether they have achieved the objectives of the course. All Performance Objectives (PO) will be evaluated by means of Pass/Fail Performance Check. Following the practicum, the candidates will be assessed by means of an evaluation grid reflecting the methodological teaching techniques outlined in the POs. Also, at the end of the course, the candidates will take a Language Proficiency Exam (LPE) in order to update their English language profile.

1. **Practicum.** Extensive use of formative evaluation will be used throughout the course in order to provide the candidate with on-going feedback. A final Performance Check (PC) will be given at the end of the practicum. The candidate will be evaluated on his/her ability to apply methodological teaching techniques outlined in the POs in an authentic teaching situation.
2. **Language Evaluation.** Language evaluation will measure general proficiency in the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), as well as the competences (linguistic, socio-linguistic,

discourse, and strategic) by means of a Language Proficiency Examination. Qualified personnel will administer the LPE. The administration of the speaking test and the correction of the writing test requires certified testers.

3. **Supplement Performance Check.** If time and resources allow, a candidate will normally be permitted to retake a PC if, in the judgment of the Training Establishment Commandant, any required extra tutoring is practical in terms of teacher time, resources and facilities; and the retake is likely to be successful. Students who fail the supplemental PC will be considered as not having attained the objective.
4. **Assessment of Progress.** In order to identify learning difficulties and to react accordingly, students will receive a written progress report at mid-course and end-of-course. The student's progress report will be kept in the student's file in order to support the decision of the Progress Review Board if required.
5. **Counseling.** Candidates showing weakness during the course will receive pedagogical counseling. The candidate having difficulties will be provided remedial assistance in accordance with the Training Establishment's resources and capabilities.
6. **Progress Review Board (PRB).** The Training Establishment will convene a PRB – formed by one military officer, one Senior Teacher, and one teacher

who has not been involved with teaching/testing the student – when:

- a student has failed a Supplementary PC;
- a student has shown unsatisfactory progress in class;

and

- a student's conduct and deportment warrant consideration for removal from the course.

The PRB will consider each case submitted for review and will recommend to the Commandant whether the candidate is to cease training, continue on course, receive additional tutoring, or receive a special training program.

7. **Feedback.** Students will be required to provide feedback at least twice during the course.

8. **Testing.** At the end of the training program a rating will be allotted for:

- the practicum, based on an evaluation grid;
- PO evaluation;
- the portfolio;
- military content teaching (execution of lessons plans);
- classroom participation;
- attendance/punctuality.

9. **Course Report.** The course report shall include the above-mentioned ratings and an updated language profile. A supporting narrative will identify the candidate's strengths and weaknesses, and comments on overall conduct during the course. A synthesis of the Communicative Proficiency Level Descriptions is attached to the course report.

The **Foreign Language Course** aims at conducting foreign language instructions in some 20 different languages. Graduates of NCR courses proceed on attaché assignments, exchange postings in Europe, or go to Operational Commands in Canada, Europe and around the world. The emphasis of training varies with the students' future assignments.

The courses comprise 5 hours of formal classroom training and 1.25 hours of self-study per day. In general, the curricula are developed according to the principles of the communicative approach. In class, all skills are taught, although the emphasis is placed on the listening, speaking and reading skills. On the other hand, due to their work requirements, students from International Operations attending basic courses will practice 5 skills: listening, speaking, reading, translation, and transcription.

A course report will be written in the first official language of the trainee. Each report will contain a signed certification of the number of foreign language training hours received by the trainee as well as the results obtained at the end of the course test.

Each student will undergo approximately two hours of testing which is designed to measure aptitudes for learning foreign languages.

Each class normally numbers 8 students, although there may be anywhere from 6 to 10 students. The Faculty is headed by one Pedagogical Counselor and includes 10 to 12 teachers. The Pedagogical Counselor manages learning activities within the term and is the first level of problem solving. He/she is also responsible for writing the course report.

French and English Second Language Courses aim at accelerating the rate of preparation of bilingual members while offering commanders the flexibility of keeping their personnel at duty stations while undergoing language training in order to minimize the disruption of Base/Wing operational activities.

This program complements the other second language training programs by providing an additional learning option suited to units as well as to lodger units for which CDA is responsible. The significant difference between this program and that of its full-time counterpart in the Language Training Center are:

- the course is given in either consecutive or interrupted blocks of 150 hours;
- part-time or full-time training are usually given at the normal workplace;
- the course is usually delivered by Alternative Service Delivery (private sector or semi-private agencies, e.g. community colleges, etc.).

A placement test must be administered to candidates in order to determine the entry point prior to nomination. Where candidates do not have a placement test, SLE tests will be used for that purpose.

The courses offered are the following:

- a. Training to single Progress Level (PL). This training is available across Canada. PL1, PL2, PL3, PL4, PL5, PL6 and PL7 are given by blocks of 150 hours. PL1, PL2, PL3 and PL4 must be completed within a period of 24 months, PL6 and PL7 within 12 months.
- b. Refresher Courses at Levels A, B and C.

- c. Computer-based Language Training. Computerized versions of (a) Training to single PLs and (b) Refresher Courses are available at most CF establishments.
- d. GO/COL Program. This Program is designed to address the special requirements of generals, colonels and lieutenants colonels. It consists of individual short training sessions of four hours a week.

Continuous Superior Level Courses are designed to allow officers who are already knowledgeable in French and have reached Progress Level 5 of the MSLTP to attain level CBC or better in their second language. The continuous course consists of 1,250 hours of intense language training spread over 46 calendar weeks.

The approach used here emphasizes communication by many different techniques: role-playing, presentations, discussions, visits, etc.; all activities are oriented toward the linguistic needs of the learner. The effectiveness of the course relies on individual involvement. The result of this is custom-made lessons produced for and by the group itself. The hours spent with the facilitator are not concentrated on studying grammar. However, this aspect of the language is not neglected, as some teaching classes are dedicated to oral and written grammatical exercises.

All the other aspects described above in the other CF courses (Course Report, Pedagogical Counselor, Testing,

Evaluation, etc.) apply without differences also to this course¹².

¹² Information taken from the Canadian Forces Language School's website: [Hhttp://www.cfls-elfc.forces.gc.ca/english/index_e.htm](http://www.cfls-elfc.forces.gc.ca/english/index_e.htm)H.

APPENDIX 11

Internal courses

All inner courses are held in Perugia.

Intensive courses involve 5 languages – English, French, German, Spanish, and Portuguese – and are oriented toward candidates with an initial language proficiency superior or equal to LPS 2-1-2-1.

Suitable candidates must take a placing test to verify their language level and to consequently organize homogeneous classes.

The duration of the courses is 13 weeks, with 34 hours of lesson a week. 4 weeks must be spent abroad in a SLEE-selected school to perfect the language.

Students are divided in groups of up to 8 people, each managed by two teachers who alternate in the didactical activities. All students are supplied with learning material and have free access to self-study infrastructures and linguistic laboratories.

During the entire duration of the courses, students are constantly monitored in their linguistic progress through compulsory monthly control tests. Participants are required to have attained an equal or superior score to that decided by the SLEE Academic Board. In case of failure to meet the minimum requirement, students will cease training.

At the end of each course, all students must take a Unified Test to determine whether they have achieved the objectives of the

training. Each candidate will receive a certificate attesting his/her language knowledge.

Students will be dismissed from the courses in the case of:

- non-attendance for a period superior to 10 (non consecutive) days; and
- lack or insufficient interest in learning a foreign language, according to the SLEE Commander's opinion.

Refresher courses are held in the same 5 languages (English, French, German, Spanish, and Portuguese) and are oriented toward candidates whose certification of initial language proficiency – superior or equal to LPS 3-2-3-2 – is about to expire or has already expired for less than a year.

The duration of the courses is 4 weeks with 34 hours of lesson a week.

Students are divided in classes of up to 6 people, managed by two teachers who alternate in the academic activities.

The general characteristics of the courses reflect those mentioned above for the Intensive courses.

Students will be dismissed from the courses in the case of:

- non-attendance for more than 2 days (non consecutive); and
- their linguistic performance does not correspond to the initial Standard Language Profile previously certificated and/or it is deficient, according to the SLEE Commandant's opinion.

Rare languages courses **are attended only by designated General Staff's personnel.**

The languages taught are Serb-Croatian, Arabic and Russian.

Each course is structured in two phases of different duration:

- a basic part of 18 weeks; and
- a perfecting phase of 22 weeks.

Both phases provide for 34 hours of lesson a week.

Students are divided into classes of up to 6 people each, managed by two teachers.

The characteristics of the previous courses apply also to these.

At the end of each phase, students must take a Unified Test to verify the achievement of the objectives of the training.

The criteria for dismissal reflect those of Intensive courses.

ISSMI course (Higher Course of General Staff Interforces)

This course is specifically tailored to officers who have already attended – and passed – the preparatory COPAD training, and it aims at reaching a good level of language proficiency (SLP 3-2-3-2).

The language taught are once again English, French, German, Spanish, and Portuguese.

Its duration is 12 weeks with 34 hours of lesson a week. Four weeks must be spent compulsorily abroad in a SLEE-selected language school.

Students are divided into classes of up to 8 people, managed by two teachers.

Characteristics regarding learning material, self-study, testing, etc, reflect those mentioned for Intensive courses.

Crash courses are specific intensive courses whose duration is not superior to 5 days with the following hours of training:

	Monday:	8 – 14	
Tuesday:	8 – 14		
	Wednesday:	8 – 14	14.30 – 16.30
Thursday:	8 – 14		
Friday:	8 – 14	14.30 – 16.30	
Saturday:	8 – 14		

These are one-to-one courses (one teacher for each student) in English, French, German, Spanish, and Portuguese.

Remote courses

All remote courses are held in Rome – at the University of Foreign Languages and Literatures *Libera Università degli Studi “S.Pio V”*.

COPAD course (Course of Language Perfecting) is a basic language course in which students will have to acquire fundamental linguistic competences in oral as well as written comprehension (Reading and Listening) and communicative capacities in written and oral production (Writing and Speaking).

The languages taught are 5: English, French, German, Spanish, and Portuguese. All academic material (books, exercise books, audiocassettes, CDs, etc.) are provided by the SLEE.

The course duration is 36 weeks, during which students will undergo 3 evaluation tests. The minimum level required to

proceed with the training is LPS 2-2-1-1. With equal or superior results, students can attend the different intensive courses in the SLEE.

Each class is articulated in different didactical parts based on political, economic, as well as military issues, and structured in:

- communicative functions;
- grammatical analysis of texts and speeches;
- active phonetics;
- bilan-tests (multiple-choice exercises).

Students who, according to the SLEE Commandant's opinion, show lack of interest in learning a foreign language and steady insufficient performance will be dismissed from the course.

The **COPAD-ISSMI course** is a preparatory English course specifically tailored to officers who are interested in attending the Higher Course of General Staff Interforces (ISSMI) at the SLEE.

The duration of this course is 16 weeks, during which students will have to undergo 2 evaluation tests. The minimum level required to proceed with the training is LPS 2-2-1-1. With equal or superior results, students can attend the ISSMI at the SLEE.

The characteristics regarding the structure of the classes, didactical material, and dismissal reflect those described above in the COPAD courses¹³.

¹³ Information taken from the *Scuola di Lingue Estere dell'Esercito's* website: [Hhttp://www.esercito.difesa.it/slee/c_ammissione.htm](http://www.esercito.difesa.it/slee/c_ammissione.htm)H.
