Jesús Baigorri Jalón. *De Paris à Nuremberg: Naissance de l'interprétation de conférence*. Translated from Spanish under the supervision of Clara Foz. Ottawa: Presses de l'Université d'Ottawa, 2004. 289 pp. ISBN 2-7603-0576-7.

Reviewed by Francine Kaufmann

The history of translation is by now a well-established field, with scores of research papers and books and academic courses. Less developed is the field of the history of interpreting, perhaps because the practice is oral and less documented. Though certainly as venerable as written translation, interpreting was shaped as a profession fundamentally in the 20th century — by the development of international summit conferences (with statesmen replacing polyglot diplomats), by the proliferation of multilingual settings (instead of the use of a lingua franca) and by the appearance of electric/electronic devices which gave rise to a quite new profession under the name "conference interpreting".

It is the birth of this new profession, and more precisely of interpreting in international institutions (the focus here is not on technical and commercial conferences) that we are invited to follow through the book by Jesús Baigorri Jalón, originally published in Spanish (Baigorri Jalón 2000). The author is a practicing conference interpreter (at the United Nations in New York, and in Spain), as well as a pedagogue (teaching interpreting at the University of Salamanca, where he obtained his Doctorate in Translation and Interpretation), but he is also a trained historian. (He wrote his Master's thesis in History and is fully acquainted with historical methodology).

All this qualifies him to write a fully documented study about the beginnings and the evolution of conference interpreting during the first part of the 20th century, choosing as *terminus a quo* the Peace Conference of Paris (1919) and as *terminus ad quem* the end of the Second World War with the Nuremberg Trial (1945–46 and "subsequent proceedings", ending in 1949), the latter having been described by Francesca Gaiba (1998), to whom Baigorri pays tribute. But the novelty in such a survey is the method developed by the author: not only interviews with eyewitnesses and relevant colleagues (which inevitably proved to be incomplete and selective) but also a search in unexplored archives in Geneva: personal files of interpreters (permanents as well as freelancers) and reports stored in large boxes in the League of Nations and one of its agencies, the ILO (International Labour Office). Having gathered his material in 1997–98, only files older than 60 years

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(that is to say, before the year 1938) were open to him. Listed in the bibliography as "unpublished sources", they are complemented by more accessible materials, i.e. "published sources", like documents of the League of Nations (minutes, staff lists, reports etc., examined mainly in NewYork), memoirs of active participants in international meetings: ambassadors, international civil servants, statesmen (among them Winston Churchill, Anthony Eden, Lloyd George, Georges Clémenceau) and interpreters (including Valentin Berezkhov, Pavel Palazchenko, Arthur Birse, Charles Bohlen and Eugen Dollmann). On top of this, Baigorri scrutinised the press coverage (mainly the *Times* and the *New York Times*) and studies about diplomacy, international communication and, of course, modern interpreting.

With this impressive arsenal, Baigorri offers us a manifold approach to the birth and evolution of a new profession, with sociological and economic, but also psychological and practical aspects. The viewpoint is clearly that of the interpreter, the man or woman generally ignored by historians, standing or sitting beside the "actors" but playing a role which needs to be precisely described in order for him or her to be better defined and recognised as a linguistic mediator, essential to the international dialogue. Some of the prerequisites of the modern profession can readily be traced back to its origins, another reason to look into history, besides our interest in discovering or rediscovering figures who have shaped the practice.

Baigorri declares that the trigger for his search was a line he read, saying that Paul Mantoux was the only interpreter at the Peace Conference of Paris, in 1919. This struck him as implausible, and he decided to check further, like an investigator tracing the past in order to reconstruct it. Jean Delisle, the editor of the "Regards sur la traduction (A Look at Translation)" series, in which the book appeared, remarks in his Foreword that the study could have begun with the Congress of Berlin, in 1878, a date set by some authors as marking the real genesis of the new practice. But most researchers agree that 1919 was indeed the year interpreting as we now know it began. Suddenly, French ceased to be the only diplomatic language, and English emerged quite spontaneously in the discussions of the "Big Four" (it was the language of Wilson and Lloyd George, but also a language fully mastered by Clemenceau, who was married to an American). The hegemony of the lingua franca having been challenged, English obtained parity as an "official language", and soon other languages also required consideration. From then on, the necessity of interpreting and translating in international meetings was, in effect, legally established.

De Paris à Nuremberg comprises five chapters, introduced by three openings and followed by a conclusion which describes the book as a "personal interpretation" of the beginning of conference interpreting. In his Foreword Jean Delisle (himself a historian of translation) praises the contribution of Baigorri to our knowledge of the 'I' of the Interpreter (often ignored or underestimated); the

seriousness — not without passion and empathy — of his investigation; and the clarity of the text, which gives "un tableau vivant" (a "living picture") of the pioneers, some of whom could presumably be a source of inspiration for the younger generations.

Clara Foz, who supervised, revised and coordinated the translation from Spanish into French (translating part of Chapter Five as well as the Introduction and Conclusion herself), tells us in her "Notes on the Translation" how this collective work was undertaken by students (mostly of Master's degree level and mostly French-speaking) at the School for Translation and Interpretation in Ottawa, where she teaches. The hardest task was to locate and reinsert the French and English quotations translated into Spanish by the author, and to identify those that had appeared in Spanish and German, in order to use the 'official' version when possible. The result is a fluid and harmonised translation, very efficient and credible. The decision not to add "translators' notes" was somewhat painful, as the group discussions were rich and relevant, but the book was dense enough. (When I asked her about a possible English version, Clara Foz wrote to me that a similar project was to be launched by the English section in Ottawa, but has not materialised).

The last "opening" is the Introduction by the author, stating his goals, presenting his methodology and outlining the content of each of the chapters.

Chapter One presents the setting, the main protagonists and the interpreters at work at the Peace Conference in Paris. This international conference was a landmark, a transition between the traditional "Diplomatic Era" (envoys of kings and princes, often of noble lineage and education, representing their country) and more open and democratised negotiations between states, emerging at the end of the 19th century, with Presidents, Ministers of Foreign Affairs or Prime Ministers participating. This early period is characterised by consecutive interpreters with high visibility, charisma and usually outstanding memory (like Paul Mantoux, Gustave Camerlynck, Stephen Bonsal and others), regarded as "magicians" and sometimes acting like prima donnas. Chapter Two looks at the heyday of consecutive interpretation — the period between the two world wars, with the Battle of Languages in the League of Nations and other organisations, and the attempt to introduce an international language: Esperanto. Baigorri introduces us to a pioneering piece of research on the work and aptitudes of interpreters of this period, published in Barcelona in 1931 by Jesús Sanz, professor at Lerida. With Chapter Three, we witness the birth of simultaneous interpreting, first called 'telephonic interpretation', based on a proposition suggested in 1924 by Boston businessman Edward Filene, with a technical solution proposed by British scientist Gordon Finlay. The first experiments of the Filene-Finlay system were conducted in the course of the yearly "International Labour Conference" of ILO, from 1925 till 1929, with constant evaluations and improvements. For the first time, interpreters helped

labour representatives from all over the world, usually monolingual (unlike the diplomats and scientists) to understand each other, saving time and gaining publicity. In 1930 and 1931, the League of Nations also experimented with the Filene-Finlay system but did not move away from consecutive.

In one short note, Baigorri reminds us that according to Chernov (1992) the Russians too were beginning to experiment with simultaneous interpreting during this period at the Sixth Comintern Congress of 1929. Booths and headphones were introduced in 1933. As for the famous simultaneous interpretation from Russian into three languages of the Nobel laureate Pavlov's introductory statement at the Fifteenth International Congress of Physiology, in 1935, Baigorri explains that it was 'false' simultaneous: Pavlov's written speech had been translated in advance and was read simultaneously through microphones by the interpreters (the same technique was used at the League of Nations).

Chapter Four introduces us to what Baigorri calls: "Les interprètes des dictateurs" (closely associated with Hitler, Mussolini and Stalin). It is a most innovative chapter since very few researchers have looked at this category of interpreters. With Chapter Five, we come back to simultaneous interpreting. According to Baigorri and most theoreticians, it was at the Nuremberg Trials that this became a prevalent method, being used on a full scale with the equipment developed by IBM.

This book stops where Baigorri Jalón's (2004) second book begins; namely *Interpreters at the United Nations: A History*, reviewed in this journal by Sergio Viaggio (2005).

In reading both, the reader interested in interpreting receives a pretty full and well-documented overview of the evolution of the profession during the 20th century (more precisely between 1919 and the 1990s), mainly in the official and political arena, still leaving some other periods and settings to explore and analyse. Until recently we could only rely on a few articles or chapters about the role and status of interpreters in history (see, for example, Roditi 1982; Kurz 1985; Van Hoof 1991; Delisle 1995, 2004; Lewis 1999; Kaufmann 2005). Since the books by Baigorri, an interview with Peter Less by Tanya Gesse (2004) has revealed other aspects of the work at Nuremberg, through the eye of an interpreter not mentioned by Baigorri. And while some of the characters and even of the episodes described by Baigorri also appear in the historical overview written by Keiser (2004), new insights and anecdotes are added, another aspect of history being touched; i.e. the first attempts to organize the profession, most conspicuously through the establishment of an international association of conference interpreters — AIIC. Keiser acknowledges the outstanding contribution of Baigorri to the historiography of interpreting, as does the *Bibliography of Translation Studies*, which concludes that *De Paris à Nuremberg* is "essential for those interested in the history of interpreting" and "goes far beyond the strictly technical to offer the foundations for a sociology

of interpreters" (Bowker et al. 2001: 7–8). The methodology used by Baigorri (also in more recent publications, such as his English article, Baigorri 2005) could well show the way to young researchers interested in shedding light on other historical aspects of conference interpreting and on the human aspects of the interpreter's work in general.

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