Le chapitre 5 ci-dessous et la table des matières sont extraits de l'ouvrage de Ruth A. ROLAND, *Interpreters as Diplomats. A Diplomatic History of the Role of Interpreters in World Politics*, publié dans la collection «Perspectives on Translation», 1999, 209 p. Cette reproduction a été autorisée par la direction des Presses de l'Université d'Ottawa.

INTERPRETERS AS DIPLOMATS

A Diplomatic History of the Role of Interpreters in World Politics

RUTH A. ROLAND

University of Ottawa Press

Table of Contents

Introduction
by Jean Delisle . . . . . .

Preface . . . . . .

Chapter 1
The Linguist of Ancient and Medieval Days . . . . . .

Chapter 2
Europe and the New World, to 1919 . . . . . .

Chapter 3
East-West Confrontation: China, Japan, India . . . . . .

Chapter 4
From Versailles (1919) to the United Nations . . . . . .

Chapter 5
Outstanding Interpreters . . . . . .

Works Cited . . . . . .

Index . . . . . .

Table of Illustrations

1. Sarcophagus of a Dacian interpreter . . . . . .
2. Punishment of an unfaithful interpreter . . . . . .
3. Friedrich von Gentz . . . . . .
4. Sacajawea . . . . . .
5. The “Big Four” and interpreter Paul Mantoux . . . . . .
6. The Nuremberg Trial. Booth of the interpreters . . . . . .
7. Léon Dostert . . . . . .
8. Sir Winston Churchill, interpreter Arthur Hurbert Birse and Joseph Stalin . . . . . .
9. Adolf Hitler, interpreter Eugen Dollmann and Galeazzo Ciano . . . . . .
10. Constantin Andronikof and Danica Seleskovitch . . . . . .

Chapter 5

OUTSTANDING INTERPRETERS

It might be enlightening to take a peek at the careers of a few of the more outstanding interpreters of the 20th century. As should have become apparent by now, the best linguists are *bona fide* intellectuals, as the career of Jean Herbert (1952) amply testifies.

A specialist in Oriental philosophy and a professor of French in Scotland before World War I, Herbert served as an officer with the British, French and American armies during the war, writing a bilingual glossary of artillery and ballistics terminology that was published in 1919. During the 1917 Anglo-French financial negotiations in London, he began his career as a conference interpreter. Herbert, who interpreted for many of the European conferences of 1919, recalls a session lasting a month, at which he was the sole interpreter, working six days a week in French, English and German. At one point, he momentarily fell asleep on his feet, but apparently continued to talk without anyone noticing the incident (Herbert 1978:7). Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, he worked at most of the great international conferences sponsored by the League of Nations and for over 100 different international organizations. The list of world leaders for whom he interpreted includes nearly all the notables of that period. Upon the establishment of the United Nations in 1945, Herbert was invited to organize the corps of interpreters, which he then directed for three years.

Paul Mantoux (fig. 5), a towering figure of all time in his exacting profession, was such a public attraction that people attended the sessions of the League of Nations just to watch him in action. At a disarmament conference of the League of Nations, Sir John Simon, the British delegate, had concluded his speech with a quotation from Shelley, just the sort of thing interpreters most dread. But Mantoux, without a moment's hesitation, "rendered the Shelley quotation in French verse, reaching a peak which will never be surpassed in the history of the art [of interpreting]" (Ranshofen-Wertheimer 1925:141). About Paul Mantoux, the American Secretary of State Robert Lansing wrote this testimony:

> It is fitting to digress for a moment and to say a word of Professor Mantoux, who wore a French captain's uniform, and was inherited by the Council of Ten from the Supreme War Council. 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 who benefitted by them, and his services commanded general admiration and praise. (Lansing 1972:105-106)

At the end of the Peace Conference (1919), Mantoux, a historian, became head of the Political Section of the League of Nations. In 1927, with William Rappard he founded the Graduate Institute of International Studies in Geneva (Delisle and Woodsworth 1995:263-264; Link 1992; Salomon 1993).

An even more colorful life was that of A.H. Birse (fig. 8). Born in St. Petersburg, Russia, in 1891, Birse may have had his future career predetermined for him simply because his parents, unlike most overseas Britons, did not return him to England for his schooling, thus enabling him to acquire native fluency in Russian. In 1917, at the age of 28, he joined the British Military Commission as one of their interpreters, and soon became an officer. After the Bolshevik accession to power, he returned to England to work for a bank, which sent him first to Poland, where he acquired a knowledge of Polish, and later to Italy, where he learned Italian. By the outbreak of World War II, Birse was enjoying a high position as a banker. Then, in 1939, he found himself a second lieutenant in the Intelligence Department of the British Army, assigned to the daily reading of a half-dozen foreign newspapers. Upon

Hitler's invasion of Russia in June 1941, Birse was dispatched to Moscow to interpret for the chief of the British Military Mission, which duty included a number of high-level conferences between Stalin and Churchill and a stint in Teheran. Birse was the only interpreter present at the conversations in 1943 between Churchill and Stalin, working both sides of the table, occasionally for as long as seven hours at a time (Birse 1967:104). Following the war, believing that his international career had come to an end, he returned to banking while teaching some interpreting courses at Cambridge. But in 1953, Australia caught a network of Russian spies, planned to put them on trial and needed a person of indubitable loyalty but expert knowledge of Russian to examine both the relevant documents and the more than 200 witnesses. Birse worked at this task for 10 months, although subjected, like everyone else connected with the trial, to constant harassment by communist sympathizers. The trial ended with the conviction of the spies.

One distinguished American State Department careerist who began as a language student was George F. Kennan, destined to become (briefly) United States ambassador to the Soviet Union in 1952. Kennan, a Princeton graduate who applied in 1928 as a trainee in the Russian language, received the usual treatment of the time—12 to 18 months of work in the field in the regular Foreign Service, followed by three years of study at a foreign university. Since the United States then had no diplomatic relations with the USSR, language trainees could not go to that country, but studied Russian either in Estonia (as Kennan did, followed by work in Berlin) or in Latvia or Lithuania. Kennan recalls complaining that he believed he was receiving inadequate instruction in "hard core sovietology"—politics, economics, and so on—but that his State Department superior admonished him that cultural subjects, such as languages, would do him more good in the long run, and Kennan declares that he never subsequently had any cause to regret that advice (Kennan 1968: 23-24, 33).

On the Russian side, Alexander Barmine, son of a schoolmaster (Barmine 1938), finished high school in 1918 and worked for a time as a tutor. After he had joined the Communist Party and given a good account of himself during the civil war that followed World War I, he received permission to attend the School of Officer Learners of the Red Army, later attaining the status of political commissar and regimental commander. Sent to War College for advanced training, Barmine enrolled in its Department of Oriental Languages, and studied *five languages simultaneously*—French, English, Persian, Hindustani

and Arabic. The war minister, Leon Trotsky, next sent Barmine to Bokhara as a language officer for the Russian ambassador, and later he became an assistant to Georgy Chicherin, the foreign minister. Having concentrated primarily on Persian (Farsi), Barmine eventually became a Soviet consul to Iran. By 1935 he had reached the rank of first secretary of the Soviet embassy in Athens, but resigned two years later because of his dislike of Stalin.

Alexander Kaznacheev, whose father had been a Party member (Kaznacheev 1962) and head of a research laboratory in the Academy of Science, was accepted in 1951 by the Moscow Oriental Institute, which had been founded by V.M. Molotov several years before. Enrolling in its five-year program, he specialized in China and the Chinese language, but during his third year decided to learn Burmese as well, primarily because knowledge of that language in Russia had been nil. (He had to learn it entirely on his own, being unable to find anyone who could teach him.) It was this that had determined his career. When, three years later, the Oriental Institute dissolved, Kaznacheev was one of the lucky quarter of its students who were permitted to transfer to the International Relations Institute, the training school for the Soviet Diplomatic Service. Since, in 1955, there was not one Burmese specialist to be found in all of the huge Soviet Union, Kaznacheev had no trouble obtaining permission to specialize in the language, graduating in 1957. Since then, he has remained the dean of Soviet "Burmologists."

Hans Jacob, born in Berlin in 1896 (Roditi 1961:80-84), was educated there at the Collège Royal Français (founded by Huguenot refugees), where he discovered within himself an extraordinary affinity for the French language. Later studying at the universities of Berlin and Munich, he began in 1919 to write under a French nom de plume, translating many of the great classics into German. After Germany joined the League of Nations in 1926, Jacob was appointed Foreign Office interpreter at the request of the minister, Gustav Stresemann, for whom he interpreted at all of the latter's conferences with Aristide Briand. In fact, between 1926 and 1933, Jacob was present at all of the major international conferences in which the Weimar Republic participated. On assignment in Geneva at the time Hitler came to power, he sagely decided not to return to Germany but to exile himself to Paris, where he helped to edit the anti-Nazi daily German-language newspaper, *Pariser Tageblatt.* Later he became the chief of a team producing anti-Nazi broadcasts for Radio Strasbourg.

After France's surrender in 1940, Jacob escaped to the United States, where, in New York, he resumed his anti-Nazi broadcasts to the German resistance movement. (Among his more noteworthy comments was a prediction of Hitler's defeat at Stalingrad.) Following World War II, Jacob returned to his linguistic career, becoming senior interpreter with UNESCO in Paris and, in 1960, a recipient of the French Legion of Honor. He was also the first president of the Association Internationale des Interprètes de Conférence (AIIC), which he helped to found with Constantin Andronikof (fig. 10).

In striking contrast to Jacob's story is that of the Austrian Eugen Dollmann (fig. 9). Born in 1914 to an upper-class family, he studied art history in Munich, then in 1927 accepted a grant for research in Rome, where he seems to have enjoyed association with most of the intellectual coterie of that period, remaining in Italy for 16 years. In 1934, he joined the Nazi Party (as Member No. 3,402,541, he assures us) and soon thereafter began his linguistic career by translating Marshal Pietro Badoglio's *The Abyssinian War* into German. That project, plus his high-level social connections, led to opportunities to translate a number of other books. But Dollmann was not destined to remain a translator, for when the Nazi youth leader Baldur von Schirach visited Italy, he was recruited as interpreter, and later performed similar services during a visit by the S.S. chief Heinrich Himmler to the police chief of Rome.

As Dollmann delicately puts it, "On November 9, 1937, I woke up one morning in a hotel in Germany to find myself in the S.S." (*ibid*.:76). According to him, he had not been eaten up by any great desire to join the S.S., and would probably never have done so had he been called upon to interpret for "some educators or agriculturalists" rather than the head of the S.S. From this point on, he became a kind of Axis interpreter-resident-in-Italy. (One of the more interesting highlights of Dollmann's career was his embroilment in the internecine S.S. feud between Himmler and his most dangerous rival, Reinhard Heydrich—the only man, says Dollmann, who ever frightened him.) In September 1938, Dollmann interpreted at the Munich conference between Hitler and Mussolini, and again when they met in the Ukraine on August 20-30, 1941. Throughout 1939, he served as interpreter and travelling companion for Italian Foreign Minister Galeazzo Ciano, Mussolini's son-in-law. At the conclusion of the war, Dollmann was captured and interrogated by the Allies. In an ironic vein, the

Austrian declares that a British officer had demanded to know why he had not prevented Italy from entering the war.

This might be an appropriate point at which to raise the question of ethical standards for language professionals. Do interpreters (or translators) bear any responsibility for the use that may ultimately be made of their labors? Do they have a moral obligation to reject assignments proffered by those to whose cause they cannot conscientiously subscribe (Pym 1997)? There are some who would answer "yes" to both questions—some, indeed, who argue that all linguists should remain freelancers, in a position to accept or reject assignments at will, thus retaining their independence and moral integrity (Brouwer 1972:4). Others disagree: for example, "I ... refuse to take the blame for environmental pollution just because I sometimes translate Operating Instructions for heavy machinery.... Hitler would have been just as bad without an interpreter" (*ibid.*:6).

It seems appropriate to mention here that interpreters can exercise some kind of power. Richard W. Brislin, in an intriguing analysis of the power wielded by interpreters over their principals, has identified five distinct kinds of power, drawing from a framework established by psychologist J.A. French. Power is defined by French as "the maximum force that person A can induce on B minus the maximum resisting force which B can mobilize in the opposite direction" (French 1956:183).

There are five types of interpersonal power that are based on the relationship between A and B. In French's words these are: "*attraction power* based on B's liking for A, *expert power* based on B's perception that A has superior knowledge and information, *reward power* based on A's ability to mediate rewards for B, *coercive power* based on A's ability to mediate punishments for B, and *legitimate power* based on B's belief that A has a right to prescribe his behavior or opinions" [italics added] (*ibid.*:183-184). All five are applicable to the role of the interpreter, although some are probably more common in practice than others.

> *Attraction power* would occur when the person needing translation help likes his interpreter as a person, above and beyond a liking based on the interpreter's special skills...

> *Expert power* is the most obvious attribute held by the interpreter, as his special skills in language are needed by monolingual people wanting to communicate with others who speak various languages...
>
> *Reward power* will likewise be frequent. French's use of the word mediate is well chosen since the interpreter may not have any rewards himself in the form of economic help or political influence, but he can mediate these by skillfully interpreting the wishes of one person ... to another...
>
> *Coercive power* is a contrast to reward power, and it refers to situations in which the interpreter can mediate punishments. The clearest case probably is the situation in which an interpreter can make communicators angry at each other by doing a poor job of interpreting their desires and feelings to each other [italics added]. (Brislin 1976:28-29)

During President Nixon's administration, while personal negotiations were going on between the President and Emperor Hirohito, the emperor, at one point, responded to a question with "I'll think about it." The interpreter should have made it clear to Mr. Nixon that this answer translated as a "no"; since this was not done, the result was a mis-understanding that produced some resentment (*ibid.*:28). Oriental people do not like to say anything that might give offense, a fact well known to any "old Asia hand" who has ever tried to get an interpreter to repeat anything that he considered rude. (A Japanese scholar wrote an article on "Sixteen Ways to Avoid Saying 'No' in Japanese" [Emmerson 1978:32].

Far worse things happened when President Carter visited Poland in December 1977, and the freelance contract interpreter supplied by the State Department turned the visit into a worldwide joke. Among his errors, the interpreter (an American) put such words as these into Mr. Carter's mouth: "When I abandoned the United States," rather than "When I left the United States"; "Your lusts for the future" instead of "Your desires for the future"; and "Our nation was woven," which should have been "Our nation was founded." Reportedly, although most Poles laughed the matter off, some government officials, including First Secretary of the Party Edward Gierek, were rather annoyed, and the American was soon replaced by a Pole who had worked for the United States Embassy in Warsaw.[1]

Finally, the fifth type of interpersonal power held by interpreters, *legitimate power*, "may be more common than would be considered at first glance. If the communicator realizes that

there are cross-cultural differences in the way that people discuss differing viewpoints and make decisions, he may call upon the interpreter (who ideally knows both the languages and the cultural practices of both parties in the negotiation) to make suggestions regarding the best way to present a certain point of view" (Brislin 1976:29-30). Here are some examples of powers as exercised by experienced interpreters sometimes to rescue a naive client from the consequences of his own ignorance.

A newly appointed American ambassador had arrived in Belgrade to confer with Marshal Tito at a time when the Yugoslav dictator was not at all popular in the United States. And what did this well-meaning neophyte do but blithely invite Tito to come to this country to explain his views! Knowing that any such invitation, particularly to a communist leader, would embarrass the United States greatly if it had not first been cleared by the president and Department of State, the horrified interpreter took it upon himself to alter his superior's remarks to a mere "hope that some day, after he had turned over the reins of government," Tito might make such a visit (Thayer 1959:90). According to Brislin's pattern of interpreters' powers, the aforementioned linguist would have been exercising "legitimate" power, this being based on his conviction that his own superior knowledge of protocol or of cultural differences justified his intervening, without permission, in order to keep his superior from making a disastrous mistake.

Top-ranking interpreters, well aware of their own worth, oft-times venture liberties that lesser employees would not dare. One such was Oleg Troyanovsky, Russian English-language interpreter for Khrushchev and Molotov. At a meeting of the Conference of Foreign Ministers in Moscow, for which he was interpreting, Troyanovsky reprimanded Britain's Ernest Bevin for telling a good-natured joke about Lenin—even though Molotov had laughed heartily at the story (Smith 1950:73)! Troyanovsky had also been known to omit some of Khrushchev's frequent references to God (an unthinking habit typical of the Russian peasantry), which the interpreter deemed inappropriate for a communist leader.

André Kaminker, the subject of more stories than possibly any other interpreter of modern times, was once rendering into French a speech of Mr. Molotov's at the UN The hour was late, everyone was eager to leave, but Mr. Molotov kept right on talking. When his turn came to interpret, Mr. Kaminker summed up the entire oration in these words: "*M. Molotov dit non*" ("Mr. Molotov says no") (Trevelyan 1973:81). And when a speaker once

complained to Kaminker that "That is not exactly what I said," the interpreter replied, "No, sir, but it is what you ought to have said" (Longley 1968:4).

Even the English-language interpreter for Adolf Hitler, whenever anyone at a conference became excited and talked too fast, did not hesitate to intervene and restore order by reminding the participants that he could process only so many words at a time. In fact, the room in which Hitler, Mussolini, Chamberlain and Daladier conferred in 1939 came to be dubbed "the schoolroom," because one of the conferees had jokingly remarked that the interpreter (Dr. Paul Schmidt) resembled a schoolmaster trying to curb unruly pupils (Schmidt 1951:103, 110).

But perhaps the most sublime example of a liberty-taking interpreter (although, in this case, with the connivance of his principal) occurred during a visit by Ferenc Molnár to President Calvin Coolidge in 1927[2] (Klay 1959:11). Accompanying the non-English-speaking author and playwright as his interpreter was Count László Széchenyi, Hungarian minister to the United States and husband of Gladys Vanderbilt. When the President inquired of Molnár regarding Hungary's economic situation, a subject of which the writer knew nothing, the latter and the Count hastily conspired to "put one over on" Coolidge. In Hungarian, Molnár related a sad story about an aged actress, a tale which he adjudged particularly suitable for the purpose because "Hungary's economic situation is probably sad and because the sadness of the story will enable both of us to look properly serious." Széchenyi then interpreted "Molnár's economic views" at some length, culminating in a request that the United States grant Hungary a loan.

Together with the examples cited in Chapter 3, of the ignoble role played by two missionary-interpreters in the drafting of the treaties of Macao and Tientsin, we may note another comparatively recent example of an interpreter who ignored the whispers of conscience to serve an evil cause, Sir John Bowring, author of two of Protestantism's most popular hymns, "In the Crown of Christ I Glory" and "Watchman, Tell Us of the Night." Bowring was both an apologist for the British opium traffic in the Far East during the 1830s, in contravention of Chinese law, and the interpreter servicing the negotiations that followed Chinese capture of the opium cargo ship, the *Arrow* (Holcombe 1900:269). Then, there was a Prussian missionary and interpreter for the East India Company, Karl A. Gutzlaff, who likewise saw nothing wrong with the opium trade. Perhaps significantly, it was from

Gutzlaff's translation of the Bible that the leader of the Taiping Rebellion (1851-1864) acquired his very weird notions of Christianity. As Nigel Cameron succinctly puts it, "When Gutzlaff died, all that remained of Christian endeavor [in China] was a very putrescent smell in the West's Christian nose" (Cameron 1970:317).

Not until after World War II was much attention paid to the question of ethical conduct for linguists, a development due chiefly to the activities of some of the Axis interpreters during the war.

Dr. Paul Schmidt, often styled "Hitler's interpreter," is undoubtedly the best known of these—though by no means the most heinous. However, Schmidt had been interpreting for some 10 years, for six different chancellors, before Hitler arrived on the scene. His first opportunity for high-level work came in 1924, when the man who had been performing for Germany at the London Conference on Reparations committed the interpreter's unpardonable sin—allowing himself to be carried away by patriotic passion, he ruined the negotiations. Schmidt replaced him, and from this point his star rose steadily. The first time he interpreted for Hitler was on March 25, 1935, during the Chancellor's conversations with Sir John Simon and Anthony Eden over German rearmament (Schmidt 1951:10, 13).

Nominally, Schmidt remained attached to the Language Services of the German Foreign Office (which he directed during World War II), with Joachim von Ribbentrop being his immediate superior. In that capacity, Schmidt interpreted for many other high-ranking Nazis besides Hitler, such as Göring. Among his more important assignments were Neville Chamberlain's meeting with Hitler, the French capitulation in June 1940, the ultimatum to the Russians in 1941 and the deportation of Hungarian Jews in 1943.

To one reading Schmidt's book with a critical eye, it is clear that, for him, the villain of the opus is not Hitler, but Ribbentrop. Despite his protestations during a BBC interview on March 31, 1971, that he had disliked Hitler from the beginning and had agreed to work for him because the job would afford "an unparalleled involvement in high-level diplomacy" (Brouwer 1972:3), his autobiography does not quite bear this out. Although the book was written long after it had become safe to criticize Hitler, his general tone in writing about the Chancellor could best be described as one of admiration. He is at great pains, for example, to discredit the many legends about Hitler's temper tantrums, his lack of mental balance, even the bad quality of his grammar. "He expressed himself clearly and adroitly," says

Schmidt, "was clearly very sure of his arguments, was easily understood, and not difficult to translate into English... The only unusual thing about him was the length at which he spoke" (Schmidt 1951:17-18). Schmidt may have asserted on the radio that he disliked Hitler, but no such statement appears in his book.

In April of 1945, Schmidt was arrested in Salzburg by the United States Army Counter-Intelligence Corps and for the next three years lived alternately in prison and under house arrest. At no time was he charged with having personally participated in any atrocities or with having encouraged anyone else to commit such deeds, but his intimate contacts with the leading Nazis and his valuable services on their behalf made him suspect to the Allied Powers—if only by contrast with other figures, such as Hans Jacob. On the other hand, the provable fact that, until 1943, he had resisted strong pressure to join the Nazi Party (*ibid.*:11), might bespeak something less than overwhelming enthusiasm for the cause, if not for Hitler himself. This, apparently, was the conclusion reached by those who held his fate in their hands at Nuremburg, where he testified as a witness both for the defense and for the prosecution. The U.S. Army, in fact, put his skills to use in the interrogation of the major war criminals. He himself was absolved of any wrongdoing.

Dr. Schmidt's moral responsibility is perhaps best left to the philosophers. Quite another case, however, is that of the Dutch millionaire Pieter Menten, who served the Nazis as a translator during the war, and who, in December 1977, was found guilty of having assisted in a mass execution of Polish Jews and was sentenced to 15 years in prison. The noted art collector, whose wealth was estimated at $100 million, was convicted of having participated in the massacre of 20 to 30 persons at the village of Podhoroce on July 7, 1941. (For want of sufficient evidence, Menten had been acquitted of a similar role in the slaying of more than 175 other persons at a different town.)

On the other side of the world, a number of Japanese interpreters were found guilty of appalling crimes during the war. One, a civilian, was sentenced to hang for having actively taken part in the rape, torture and murder of unarmed civilians in the Philippines in 1945. Another abused the Dutch inmates of a prisoner-of-war camp on Java. And there were at least two "hell ship" incidents involving interpreters. In the curious case of the *Oryoku Maru*, en route from the Philippines to Japan in 1944, the interpreter, Shusuke Wada, received the death sentence for mistreatment of prisoners on board, although the captain of the ship was

acquitted on the ground that he had been unable to prevent the atrocities (Piccigallo 1979:86).

The worst story of all is undoubtedly that of Nimori (Russell of Liverpool 1958:121-127), the sadistic master of a Japanese ship carrying British prisoners-of-war. Nimori was chief interpreter at the Japanese prison camp in Hong Kong. On September 25, 1945, the *Lisbon Maru* set out from that port bound for Japan, with 1,816 English and Scottish prisoners packed into three holds, plus 2,000 Japanese soldiers returning home. Nimori was assigned to sail with them as executive in charge. Apparently, he did not treat them with undue brutality until after a torpedo struck their ship. No prisoners were injured in that attack but, perhaps out of rage at the torpedoing, Nimori set out to make their lives intolerable from then on. The first thing he did was to confine all 1,816 men to the holds with no water and no sanitary facilities, despite the fact that many were already ill. When they requested water, he sent down buckets of urine.

Out of desperation, a few men tried to dig their way out of the hold, but the Japanese fired on them, inflicting some casualties. Eventually, when the ship began to sink because of the torpedo damage, many prisoners escaped, to be picked up by Chinese fishermen who treated them kindly but who were then forced to surrender them to the Japanese who came looking for them. Of the original number, only six men managed to make good their escape; 846 died in one way or another, while 970 were recaptured. Most of the latter, so weak they could hardly stand, were either personally beaten by Nimori, or ordered by him to be beaten.

In October 1946, Nimori went on trial in the British Military Court in Hong Kong on eight charges of war crimes and was found guilty of all of them. Strangely, he did not receive the death sentence, but was remanded to prison for 15 years.

It may be argued that such peoples' language skills have nothing to do with the case—that a sadist is a sadist whatever his occupation. True enough, but the point is precisely that any profession may be misused for vile purposes. A physician may poison a patient, a lawyer may embezzle from a client, a teacher may exploit a child sexually—all of which point to the necessity for universally accepted codes of ethics in all occupations. As we have seen, it is quite possible for a linguist, particularly in wartime, to grossly abuse his powers, or, at the least, to abet an unworthy cause.

Concern over this matter was what led the Congress of the International Federation of Translators (FIT) to adopt in 1966 a Code of Honor stating, among other things, that a translator/interpreter ought to refuse any task that he or she thinks has illegal or indefensible aims, or that is contrary to the public interest (Brouwer 1972:4). In other words, the politically responsible linguist will seek out and accept only those assignments whose aims are "socially acceptable." Clearly, this is no panacea. For one thing, it assumes an ability on the part of the linguist to distinguish between good and evil, a sensitivity notoriously lacking among those subjected to totalitarian brainwashing. But it *is* a step in the right direction, because it places the world's highest-level organization for language professionals solidly on the record as in favor of its members' political and social responsibility.

We can think of nothing more appropriate with which to conclude our account of the ups and downs of a linguist's career than this true story from the old Austro-Hungarian Empire (Klay 1959:11).

The annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina by Austria-Hungary in 1908 gave rise to political unrest throughout the Balkan region, an insurgence that was to culminate in the assassination of Archduke Francis Ferdinand at Sarajevo. With armed bands of guerrillas roving the mountains of Bosnia, one Feldmarschall-Leutnant Ottokar Putz von Eichensieg decided that the first order of business should be to approach and coerce the most powerful of the dissident chieftains, Mehmed Hussein Ali. But when the German-Serbian interpreter who had been hired to service the meeting became ill, a substitute was hastily rounded up—a Croat named Zdenko Sabotic.

During the conference, the fierce Mehmed Hussein Ali proved amazingly conciliatory, in view of the fact that Feldmarschall Eichensieg's first words to him were an ultimatum for the immediate disbanding of his forces. In fact, the conversation became more amicable by the moment, and was concluded with a signed peace agreement! Word of the Marshal's sensational triumph was wired to Vienna at once.

The next morning, a pale, trembling Zdenko Sabotic came to the Marshal and confessed that what he had interpreted the day before had been "statements by fine Vrsac wine, the very spirit of peace to all." An outraged Marshal ordered Sabotic jailed, to be shot the following day, and then sat down to ponder what his own future might hold. While he was thus engaged, a telegram arrived from his Imperial Majesty, informing the Marshal that he

would shortly be the happy recipient of a Decoration. Scarcely had he digested this news than an emissary arrived with gifts from Mehmed Hussein Ali.

A speedily liberated interpreter was commended to Emperor Franz Joseph for receipt of a minor order and a pension.

Notes

1. One's first reaction, probably, would be to marvel that such an inept linguist should have been assigned to a high-level mission. Even to those ignorant of Polish, it would seem that the words that the interpreter stumbled over were so elementary that even a person with less-than-native fluency should have been able to select the correct ones. This was not a situation calling for familiarity with obscure Polish proverbs. According to the man involved in the Warsaw fiasco, he had been given no copy of the President's remarks until a half-hour *after* the plane had landed and Mr. Carter had finished moving through the reception line. As if this were not enough, the interpreter had been forced to work in the open air under the most adverse weather conditions, standing in cold, freezing rain for two hours, until he was, in his own words, "thoroughly frozen and soaked to the marrow of my bones." Moreover, the interpreter's true field of expertise was not Polish, but Russian, and certain turns of phrase that would have been quite correct in Russian were inappropriate in Polish. One cannot help wondering why, in the entire city of Washington (or even, in the air age, the entire United States), no suitable interpreter whose primary language was Polish could not have been found!

2. His story reminds me of the one about a British ambassador, Lord Ponsonby, back in the days when few Turks knew English, whose custom it was to count to 50, gesticulating and varying his tone, thus persuading his Turkish hearers that he was making a speech (Platt 1971:173).