CONFERENCE REPORT

Xth World Congress of the International Federation of Translators (FIT)

Theme: "Translators and Their Position in Society".

August 17th-23rd, Vienna, Austria, at the Hotel Intercontinental.

Organised by the Österreichischer Übersetzer- und Dolmetscherverband "Universitas", with the support of UNESCO.

FIT is a non-governmental organization enjoying Category A status with UNESCO. Created in 1955, FIT now embraces 40 member societies worldwide. FIT has been characterized by its unflagging efforts to improve the social and legal standing of the translator/interpreter, as well as by its more theoretical objectives, the promotion of the cultural role of translation and its norms, standards and achievements. The popularity of the 1984 congress testifies to the success with which those aims have been pursued.

(In the following report, the international abbreviations used in the Congress have been adopted to indicate the country speakers represented, not necessarily that of their origin.)

A portion of the congress period was devoted to statutory congress activities and meetings of FIT committees and commissions, at which attendance was restricted to the representatives of FIT member societies. The General Congress opened on Monday, 20th August, with an inaugural keynote address on the theme of the congress by Professor M. Wandruszka (A). This occasion had been keenly looked forward to by the many participants, myself included, who knew Professor Wandruszka only through his work, but had not had the privilege of hearing him speak. Some of Professor Wandruszka's conclusions concerning the latest developments, machine translation for example, struck one as erring on the side of cautiousness.

After the opening of the exhibition, which was well attended throughout the conference, the UNESCO-FIT plenary session occupied the first afternoon's programme. The following reports and papers were presented:
La co-opération UNESCO/FIT: A Lilova, BG

Report by the UNESCO representative: D. Jobe, UNESCO.

La traduction et ses problèmes dans les pays d'Afrique: Professor E. Simpson, NIG.

La réception de la littérature des pays en développement en Europe: L. Mileva, BG.

The status of the Translator: H. Schwarz, D.

These presentations were followed by discussion.

Tuesday 21st August saw the 600-strong conference divided into three working groups, organized according to fields of interest and themes. The previous day's capacious assembly hall was telescoped by means of sound-proof partitions into three sizable meeting rooms.

On the Wednesday, further juggling succeeded in provided two larger meeting rooms for the two working groups. The system adopted for the working groups called for main presentations of approximately thirty minutes' duration, four in each group, between the hours of 9 and 11 a.m. After the mid-morning coffee break, additional papers were presented until the adjournment for lunch. Afternoons were supposedly reserved for thematic discussions.

Working Group I ("Literary/non-literary translation") was presided over by H. Fischbach, USA, assisted by E. Nikolova, BGA, and U. Roy-Seifert, A.

Sergei Goncharenko, USSR, who holds the Chair of Translation (Spanish) at Moscow Foreign Languages College, spoke on "the Possible in the Impossible". He compared literary and technical translation in that both recreate a conventionally bound source text. Striving for equipollence (in the logician's sense, one assumes) was taken to result in conventional equivalence. The requirement stipulated for adequacy criteria was that these be system-based and dynamic, yet also capable of universal application.

Edward Osers, GB, current Chairman of the Translators' Association, spoke, under the title "Unity in Diversity", on the need for greater "interdisciplinary" understanding between translators of various types of text, to be achieved by viewing "literary" and "non-literary" translation as the poles of a continuous spectrum of text varieties rather than as non-comparable or even conflicting activities.

James Holmes, NL, spoke on "Developments in Literary Translation and Translation Studies in the West". Professor Holmes, in a prestidigitatory sequence of metaphor, analogy and idiom, urged his audience to embrace the belief that translation, once relegated to the remotest areas of "Left Field", was marching "towards the Pitcher's Box", if at times with a gait hamstrung by the handicapping somnolence of those residing in the Ivory Towers of "Academe".
There was standing room only, and little enough of that, when a receptive and enthusiastic audience gathered to hear the address of Eugene Nida, USA, on the topic "Translating Means Translating Meaning". It was only a superficial impression that this arresting title was yet another of the cryptic headlines apparently favoured by speakers in Working Group One: Once again, Nida exhibited his ability to make the crooked straight and the rough places plain. A complex theoretical overview was presented with lucidity and system. Nida recommended a sociosemiotic and sociolinguistic approach to translation problems as a method for coping with issues of meaning on all levels: lexical, grammatical, interpersonal, rhetorical. Such an approach would not seek to oust or supplant existing theoretical strategies - be they philological, linguistic or communicative - although recent linguistic theory has tended to overlook the interpersonal level - but would assume a complementary rôle, extending the theoretical scope rather than uprooting its foundations.

"The issue of functional equivalence in translating can be most usefully discussed in terms of various types of isomorphisms, as these relate to different levels: literal, analytical, symbolic."

The additional papers in Working Group One included:

M. Schubert, DDR: "Gemeinsamkeiten und Unterschiede literarischer und nicht-literarischer Übersetzung."

A. Ihenacho, NIG: "Translators and Aspects of Non-Literary Translation in Nigeria."

J. Lipski, PL: "Sci-tech Translation in Countries with Languages of Limited Diffusion."

Eva Bornemann, A: "Übersetzungen von Lyrik - eine unmögliche Aufgabe?"

The afternoon's discussion was presided over by M. Fischbach, USA, assisted by E. Nikolova, BG, and U. Roy-Seifert, A.

Working Group II, "Translators/interpreters", was chaired by Dr. H.H. Butler, A., with A. Kopczynsky, PL., and M. Garcia Landa, E., as vice chairman and reporter respectively.

Main presentations scheduled for Working Group II:

A. Daly, GB: "Interpreting for International Satellite Television."

G. U. Chernov, USSR: "Interpretation Research in the Soviet Union: Results and Prospects."

D. Seleskovitch, F: "Les notions de signifiant/signifié, de concept et de sens en interprétation."

H. Hiller, D: "Glanz und Elend des Gerichtsdolmetschers und Übersetzers."
Additional papers:

B. Alexieva, BG: "Semantic Analysis of the Text in Simultaneous Interpretation"

K. Dejean, F: "L'interprétation et la traduction en Asie du Sud-Est"

M. Laine, SF: "New ways of Interpretation - A New Breed of Translators"


Working Group III, "Translators/Terminologists", was conducted under the chairmanship of Christian Galinski, A. Nada Kerpan, CDN, was reporter.

Professor Dolores Raventos de Castro, Venezuela, presented the first main paper in this section, on the subject of the activities of terminologists, translators and interpreters in a country, Venezuela, with developing terminologies.

A. Hoyer, NL, followed with "(Mikro)computer für Übersetzer und Terminologen."

The paper of the third speaker, Robert Dubuc, CDN, is published in its entirety elsewhere in this newsletter.

M. Nagao/J. Tsuji, Japan, concluded the section with a stimulating and well-received state-of-the-art review of the M(achine) T(ranslation) situation today, with time for one or two realistic glances at the anxious traditionalists' current bogeyman, mechanization. An outline was offered of the possible future implications for, and impact on, human translation activities. The paper summarized the kinds of texts for which current MT systems are appropriate, and described the research objectives of on-going MT projects.

Additional papers in Working Group III:


G. Samuelsson-Brown, GB: "The maintenance of standards."

J. Hohnhold, D: "Technologische Arbeitsfelder in der Übersetzungswerkstatt."

R. R. K. Hartmann, GB: "Translation equivalence: a model of lexical approximation and its relevance to the terminological dictionary."

One of the numerous (well over twenty) supplementary papers, that of Dr. Rakšaniova, CS, appears elsewhere in this issue of the newsletter.

Working Group IV, Wednesday, was led by V. Petioky, A, with the support of M. Hrala, CS, and G. Cammaert, B. The theme(s): "Theory/Training/Practice".

Main presentations:

Prof. Wilss, D: "Theorie und Praxis des Übersetzens"
V. N. Komissarov, USSR: "Training Professional Translators: The role of Translation Theory."
J. R. Ladamiral, F: "Théorèmes pour la traduction."
R. van den Broeck, B: "Towards a more appropriate Model of Translation Teaching."

Additional papers:

R. P. Roberts, CDN: "Teaching Translation Theory - considerations both general and in the Canadian Context."
H. Picht, DK: "The terminology component in translator training programmes."
G. Rado, H: "Basic Principles and organized Research in the History of Theory of Translation"
G. Lurguin, B: "La pratique de la lecture morphétymologique dans la formation de traducteurs."

Working Group V, also Wednesday: "Language Specialists/Society". H. Schwarz, D, Chairman; E. Schwarz, A, Deputy Chairman; P. Crampton, GB, Reporter.

Main presentations:

B. Raschauer, A: "Status und rechtliche Stellung des Sprachmittlers als Angehöriger eines freien Berufsstandes."
J. D. Graham, GB: "The status and legal position of the staff (in-house) translator/interpreter in industry and commerce."
M. Schmitz, DDR: "Status und rechtliche Stellung des Übersetzers und Dolmetschers im Arbeitsnehmerverhältnis im Staatsdienst."
M. Höjer, S: "Le status du traducteur littéraire"

Additional papers:

R. Alfarano, BR, spoke on the social and professional profile and perspectives of translators/interpreters in Brazil.
A. Margoti, Tanzania, spoke on translators in a community with high illiteracy rates.
W. Skowronski, PL, reviewed the social status of translators in Poland, and K. Gingold, USA, offered a survey of their legal and social status in the USA.

On the morning of Thursday, 23rd August, participants had an opportunity to visit Infoterm (please see p.34). The FIT closing session, 14.00-18.00, was devoted to the reports of working groups, and to resolutions, and the presentation of the P. P. Caillé Memorial Award, the FIT-Nathorst Translation Prize and the FIT-Lindgren Translation Prize. FIT President, Dr. H. Bühler, gave the closing address.
This 1984 Congress worthily marked the completion of FIT's first decade: huge attendance figures, a multifaceted programme studied with illustrious names, elevated aims and objectives, both theoretical and pragmatic; an impressive administrative infrastructure; occasions both glitteringly social and pleasantly instructive—the official "cocktail-dansant" at the City Hall, sight-seeing tours to Schönbrunn and Belvedere; the City of Vienna itself, cosmopolitan and eclectic in many cultural respects, and poised geographically and (more recently, and by statute, politically) at the watershed between North and South, East and West.

Conferences with aspirations to academic content are seldom noted for their clockwork precision, with speakers brutally brought to heel by watch-wielding chairmen. Disruptive waves of applause from neighbouring rooms with an alternative sense of timing, premature clattering of coffee cups, the insurge and outsurge of sporadic drifts or tidal waves of participants bemused by local transportation or wishing to change workshops in midstream, are hazards all too familiar to the seasoned conference-goer. And, at FIT, there was a great deal going on at once. Most of it worked well.

Nevertheless, when the first few speakers are permitted, or permit themselves, to distort the programme by over-extending, the result is to the disadvantage of all subsequent speakers, and, indirectly, to the detriment of the smooth running of the conference as a whole. Chairmen could in some cases have prevented this by a show of strength when the time was ripe.

While some of the most interesting comments from the floor failed to spark off the appropriate reaction from the platform, in other cases, although the official programme promised plenary discussions, an interminable list of "spontaneous" contributions was announced. These proved often to have all the impromptu spontaneity of the "spontaneous demonstrations" of Orwell's 1984, and their relationship with the foregoing presentations was at times tenuous in the extreme. Many took the form of carefully prepared "statements" read aloud, which were not capable of stimulating debate or controversy.

Yet, on the whole, the mammoth FIT congress was a success. And there prevailed especially one most welcome overall trend: this 1984 congress seemed to offer a modicum of hope for the future. Upon leaving Vienna, one felt a new optimism: one felt the old issues were at last emerging from the mists of prejudice and superstition which have so long enveloped them; the warring factions were perhaps less rigidly entrenched. They cropped up, of course; the translator's inferiority complex, the hankering for reassurance and recognition; the gallant "traditionalist" quixotically striving to arrest single-handed the advance of the Demon Technology; the mutual distrust of translators from various domains (as though the activity were a matter of compartments and not of a continuous spectrum, as Edward Osers rightly asserted); the apparent irreconcilability of the adherents of various theories, and the joyful anarchism of those who scornfully dismiss all theories as mentalistic eyewash.
Yet one sensed a new opening up, a willingness, if not to build bridges, at least to refrain from sabotaging them; even to re-connoître the terrain for appropriate sites for their construction.

Something will need to be done first, of course, about clearing away the débris of the ambitious edifices with which former pioneers have littered up the landscape...

But the climate of tolerance and good-will which prevailed at Vienna may in the long run prove as valuable to the status and development of the science, art and craft of translation and its practitioners as other periods of more innovatory, but more isolated, brilliance. Translation is an activity which cannot long thrive in isolation, nor are intellectual sectarianism or anchoritism conducive to the development of its theoretical foundations.

**Visit to Infoterm**

Those who visit Infoterm - and FIT Congress participants were no exception - fall into three categories: the converts, who, convinced of the vital interdisciplinary relevance of terminology for all areas in which LSP plays a rôle, arrive agog with interest and curiosity at Infoterm's impressive premises in the Heinenstrasse; those who, like the undersigned, have sloughed the original superstition and incredulity by attending courses and seminars in terminology and are alert to its importance but unaware of how to undertake optimal systematic accumulation and exploitation of terminological data; and those intractable unbelievers who persist in the delusion that "terminology is not a field which can be researched with any seriousness" - rather akin to the ostrich-like attitude of the philological translator who believes that Machine Translation should just be ignored, in the hope that it will fade away ... The refusal to accord diplomatic recognition to major areas may express a point of view, but it has never succeeded in affecting the reality of their existence.

All categories of visitor, convert, novice and agnostic, are welcome at Infoterm; none of them leaves without an appreciable shift in perception of the weight which today attaches to the field of terminology.

Infoterm was founded 14 years ago on the basis of an agreement between UNESCO and the Austrian Standards Institute. Infoterm is sponsored by UNESCO under the UNISIST programme, which fosters the exchange of scientific and technical information at all levels; Infoterm's operations are financed by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Construction and Technology, the Federal Economic Chamber, and the Austrian Standards Institute. The pioneer research, still influential today in Infoterm and throughout the world, wherever terminology is mentioned, was based on the now-classic work of the late Prof. R. Wüster (Austria). His expertise provided a theoretical foundation, his extensive collection of international documents on terminology and lexicography - accumulated through 4 decades and now housed at Infoterm - provided the nucleus of the research library.

The details of Infoterm's history and ever-expanding activities
will be well known to many. Co-operation within the TermNet network, which came into being through a recommendation of the First Infoterm Symposium (Vienna, 1975) followed up by a feasibility study, finds a forum in the periodical "TermNet News" which in its first year of life achieved a circulation of over 1,000. Infoterm acts as a focal point for TermNet operations. These include developing the scientific theoretical basis for terminology and its principles; fostering co-operation in the development of terminologies; promoting co-operation in the accumulation, processing and dissemination of terminological data and information within the TermNet framework. Infoterm offers terminology training to selected specialists; convenes international meetings to highlight current cruces and the latest developments, conducts studies, makes recommendations for pilot projects and expert appointments, plans and co-ordinates the exchange of data.

Infoterm's general activities include extensive work in documentation and information dissemination at international level, and the elaboration of specialized vocabularies. Its aims include the world-wide link up of term banks, and the publicizing and promotion of training opportunities, especially in developing countries.

In late 1983, Infoterm staff assisted in conducting workshops and seminars including the first Hispanoterm terminology course/workshop, Madrid (November, in co-operation with the Copenhagen School of Economics); the East African Centre for Research on Oral Traditions and African National Languages (EACROTANAL) Seminar on Terminology, Zanzibar, Republic of Tanzania (December).

A current project in the field of bibliography is BT 12, a questionnaire-based register of Terminology Theses for reference.

The 2nd Infoterm Symposium is scheduled for April 14-17, 1985, Vienna.

Infoterm is a non-profit organization (some of its services have to run on a cost-recovery basis, though). Organizations active in the field of terminology are welcome to join TermNet and their co-operation is invited on the programmes that interest them.

I should like to conclude by quoting one or two remarks made by Prof. Helmut Felber, Director of Infoterm, at the First National LSP Symposium, Eindhoven, Netherlands, in March 1984 (slightly abbreviated, Ed):

"The rapid progress evident in all areas of human activity is reflected in an equally rapid increase in the number of new concepts. These new concepts must be expressed either by existing terms, or by terms created from existing words, or by the combination of word elements. The problem is that the number of roots and affixes available in any one language amounts to but a few thousand, while the number of concepts in any one subject field exceeds millions. This means that the limits of terminolo-
gical growth will soon be reached. This means that in the not too distant future, it will no longer be possible to assign an unambiguous linguistic symbol to a concept. In consequence, man-machine, machine-machine but also inter-human communication will become increasingly difficult, ending in a total breakdown of communications. For this reason, the urgent need to organize terminology work at national and international level may no longer be ignored. Moreover, LSP research and the promotion of LSP teaching has become an issue of paramount importance".


This thesis represents a major applied research project presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of doctor of education. Dr. Coad is currently Program Co-ordinator of the Work Oriented and Related Learning Development Program at the North Orange County Community College District, Fullerton, California.

The background for the study was the growth of an immigrant and/or refugee population whose limited proficiency in the majority language of the community (English) debarred them from benefit from vocational training programmes. Not only did the language barrier render job market opportunities immediately inaccessible; it also set courses designed to upgrade skills beyond the reach of limited-English adults, thereby retarding or prohibiting their integration into society as self-supporting and productive members.

The methodology adopted for the study reflects pragmatic efficiency: study of available literature; questionnaire-based information accumulation; establishment of an operational and functional vocational-linguistic model, with "curricular content developed to correlate with competency-based criteria of vocational training programs that were currently on-going in the district—namely Machine Shop and Business Skills."

The author reminds us that the refugee phenomenon is universal, and presents problems also within the realm of education. She is confident that language programmes, on both local and international scales, will be able to replicate and profit from the present study in the vocational approach to language skills acquisition, noting that in 1980 over 250 million children and 600 million adults still lacked basic education (Kare Drobnic, "800 million Lack Basic Education", English for Specific Purposes, September 1980, p. 4).

The full impact of this study will not be felt before its recommendations have been adapted and, indeed, implemented elsewhere, in educational institutions with comparable situations. In the interests of achieving this end, abstracts will be supplied to "calls for papers" from international groups.

While admiring the integrity of Dr. Coad's aims and the thoroughness with which she pursues them, one is moved to express