

**The care and feeding of linguists: the working environment of interpreters,  
translators and linguists during peacekeeping in Bosnia-Herzegovina**

Dr Catherine Baker

University of Southampton

Contact details: Department of Modern Languages, Avenue Campus, University of Southampton, Highfield Road, Southampton, SO17 1BF.

Email: [c.baker@soton.ac.uk](mailto:c.baker@soton.ac.uk)

Abstract:

The history of war and peacekeeping has little to say about languages or the people who work with them, yet a closer inspection shows that contacts between different languages and the presence of an interpreter were a routine experience during the peacekeeping and peace-building operations conducted by the UN and NATO in Bosnia-Herzegovina. This paper shows how political, strategic, tactical and economic pressures affected the working lives of local civilians employed as interpreters/translators/linguists and the soldiers from the multinational force who served as military interpreters. In so doing, it argues that the history of interlingual communication deserves to be included in the history of conflict.

The United Nations (UN) and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) operations in Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH) to safeguard humanitarian aid convoys and protect the UN safe areas during the war (1992–95), then implement and uphold the Dayton peace agreement which laid out BiH's post-war settlement, required a multi-national assortment of soldiers and civilian defence staff to encounter a place of which they mostly knew little and forced the remaining inhabitants of BiH to encounter them. Indeed, the activities of 'peacekeeping' comprised a multitude of intercultural encounters not only between the peacekeepers and the local civilian and military populations but also between the soldiers from more than 30 different national and military cultures who worked together at headquarters, in logistics or engineering projects, on weapons inspections and in combined training exercises. Most intercultural interactions were also encounters between languages. They could rarely be accomplished without at least one interlocutor resorting to a language which was not his or her mother tongue or alternatively without the involvement of an interpreter or translator.

Studies of the interpreter in war and international relations concentrate on interpreters' privileged access to power-holders and their capacity to control the transmission of information. Some historians have also begun to investigate the military and diplomatic uses of languages during the First World War, when area experts and native speakers were employed to produce propaganda,<sup>1</sup> and in the Ottoman Empire, where a corps of long-term resident dragomans in Constantinople produced political and commercial news, intelligence and knowledge for the Ottoman court, the foreign diplomats they served and the multi-generational dragoman families to which they often belonged.<sup>2</sup> However, most historical works about conflict interpreters concern the

Second World War or after, reflecting the professionalization of interpreting after the trials of German war criminals.

To date, the emphasis in studies of Second World War interpreters has either been on court interpreting, as at the Nuremberg trials,<sup>3</sup> or on intelligence work.<sup>4</sup> Roger Dingman, for instance, has shown that US forces struggled to recruit trustworthy interpreters for the Pacific theatre amid the national paranoia about Japanese-Americans. The cadre of white military linguists, Dingman argues, had to overcome their socialization as combat soldiers earmarked to fight the Japanese enemy in order to build on the methods of their language training and develop an empathy with the civilians that troops encountered and interned.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, Navajo and Comanche men were famously recruited as ‘code talkers’ in order to outwit Japanese interception of radio signals in theatre.<sup>6</sup> Trust and origin were as problematic in Australia as in the US: Australian military linguists also served in the Pacific theatre, but those with immigrant backgrounds experienced discrimination and were unable to take posts open only to commissioned officers.<sup>7</sup> For the period after 1945, several memoirs by interpreters who worked for eastern bloc leaders during the Cold War were published in the West as insights into the thought-processes of personalities such as Stalin, Gomulka and Gorbachev.<sup>8</sup> A small number of linguist memoirs have also emerged from the war in Iraq.<sup>9</sup>

In published accounts of the peacekeeping operations in BiH, the figure of the interpreter is usually on the margins. Usually, interpreters are the occasion for a story about the devastation of the area in which the memoirist served, the destruction of pre-war multi-ethnic Sarajevo or the atmosphere of suspicion among the three ethnic groups involved in the conflict. The interpreter flits in and out of recollections of meetings with hard-drinking generals, tense moments on patrol or off-duty nightlife. Although it is common to acknowledge, like Bob Stewart (the commander of the first British battalion

in BiH), that ‘their work was crucial to the achievement of our mission’,<sup>10</sup> very little research and very few books have taken the individuals who facilitated language contacts as their point of departure. Nonetheless, working and often living with an interpreter was part of many peacekeepers’ everyday lives – just as working and often living with peacekeepers was part of the interpreters’ everyday lives.

The UN mission to BiH began in 1992, initially as an extension of its monitoring and peacekeeping activities in neighbouring Croatia. The United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) headquarters set up outside the conflict zone, in Sarajevo, found itself on the front line in April–May 1992 when BiH declared independence and fighting broke out between the Bosnian Croat army (HVO), the Bosnian Serb army (VRS) and the army of the Sarajevo government, which tended to be understood as the Bosniak army (ABiH). UNPROFOR’s mandate was extended to BiH itself and its task of securing aid convoys later extended to protecting the UN safe areas and monitoring no-fly zones. After a peace agreement was signed at Dayton in December 1995, UNPROFOR was replaced by a NATO-led force which aimed first to implement the agreement (e.g. with frequent weapons inspections) and then stabilize the country, which Dayton had divided into the Republika Srpska (RS: Serb Republic) and the Muslim–Croat Federation. Recent scholarship on the war in BiH encourages us to see it as a multi-dimensional set of local conflicts which intersected with the strategic objectives of the major armies involved and to recognize that the image of an essentialist ethno-religious war was consciously disseminated by elites who benefited from a continuation of hostilities.<sup>11</sup> However, the prevailing public representation of the Bosnian conflict in the states which contributed troops to the peacekeeping effort was of a long-standing antagonism between three clearly-defined groups, the Bosnian Croats (Catholic), the Bosnian Serbs (Orthodox) and the Bosnian Muslims (Muslim; the alternative term ‘Bosniaks’ is also

used to distinguish ethnic and religious identity). To talk about three sides or factions is somewhat simplistic but reflects the understanding of most peacekeepers<sup>12</sup> – and the reality imposed on Bosnians whether they subscribed to it or not.

The work of ‘interpreters’ sometimes took them beyond what the linguistic profession understands as interpreting (spoken communication between languages) and into translation (written communication, drawing on a different set of skills). Usually without clear job descriptions, those involved in language work could be interpreters and translators in the same working day, although the term ‘interpreter’ is in common military use for referring to local civilian language staff. This paper follows the usage of the author’s interview participants by preferring the term ‘interpreter’ for locals and for military personnel whom they or others described as such. So as not to exclude written communication from the account altogether, ‘linguist’ has also been used as a general term for those employed to carry out language work. ‘Translator’ is used when authors under discussion who have used it, although none of the terms should be taken to imply that an individual did or did not have a certain qualification – especially in the chaotic wartime period, where some of the most hazardous language work was undertaken by young local staff with none.

The situation of interpreters and language contacts in BiH sits at the intersection of matters raised by several disciplines. Recent developments in translation studies, for instance, give sound theoretical reasons for studying formal and informal translation and interpretation – ‘language contacts’ of all kinds – in conflict. Mona Baker has observed that translators and interpreters in conflict situations are always ‘firmly embedded in a series of narratives that define who they are and how they act in the world’. Moreover, she argues, they cannot ‘escape responsibility for the narratives they elaborate and promote through their translating and interpreting work’.<sup>13</sup> Meanwhile,

Michael Cronin has argued for ‘a critical translation studies’ which would interact with social theory, security studies and globalization research.<sup>14</sup> There is a trend in south-east European area studies towards investigating the relationship between locals and internationals in places such as BiH which have experienced significant inflows of international personnel, capital and ideology as the so-called ‘international community’ attempts to reshape local social and political relations.<sup>15</sup> The anthropologist Andrew Gilbert, for example, thus emphasises how OSCE internationals’ limited knowledge of the local language in BiH excluded them from critical flows of information and forced them to stake their reputation on the abilities of their local interpreters.<sup>16</sup> Militaries themselves, meanwhile, have begun to give higher-level consideration to the concept of ‘operational language support’ – how to recruit or employ people with the required knowledge, how to train them and how best for other personnel to work with them. Drawing on oral history interviews with individuals who were involved with peacekeeping in BiH as part of the British Army or NATO, as well as published UK, US and Dutch sources, this paper outlines how the working lives of local interpreters and linguists from the troop-contributing countries changed as international strategies and local conditions altered in BiH.

### **Local interpreters**

*During the war: UNPROFOR (1992–95)*

The militaries that contributed to UNPROFOR, which were still largely on a Cold War footing when the Bosnian conflict broke out, contained very few personnel who already spoke the language they had known as ‘Serbo-Croat’. Once the peacekeeping forces

arrived in BiH, it became apparent that the mission required extensive interaction with the local community as well as the armies involved in the conflict, requiring a high level of language support. The solution was to hire local interpreters for every UNPROFOR office, every military observer team and the bases of the many battalions which formed part of the UN force. The employees were usually teachers or students of foreign languages. Some were professionals in other areas, such as the doctor who worked as an interpreter for the British general Michael Rose (Rose claimed this doctor, a Croat, had been prevented from working at the Sarajevo hospital because of his ethnicity),<sup>17</sup> and a remarkable number were engineering students and/or the children of engineers. Especially in smaller towns, young people might be hired before they had finished their studies or even secondary school. The successful candidates received payment in hard currency, a job while troops were stationed in their location, and access to necessities in short supply – shelter, protection and food.

Comparatively the largest amount of material available in the UK on local interpreters during the UNPROFOR stage relates to UNPROFOR's first British battalion, The 22nd (Cheshire) Regiment, which deployed to BiH from December 1992 to June 1993 with a cavalry squadron attached for reconnaissance. When the commanding officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Bob Stewart, made a preliminary visit to BiH to work out where to base the battle group, the CO of a nearby Canadian battalion advised him to recruit fifteen interpreters as 'a very high priority'. Although the Cheshires also had a British military interpreter with a Serbo-Croat degree available (Captain Nick Stansfield), he was unable to stay permanently in the battle group's base at Vitez, so local interpreters would be indispensable. Indeed, Stewart wrote in his memoir that he had already anticipated the need to recruit 'a considerable number of native-speaking interpreters, probably with a mix of Serb, Croat and Muslim

backgrounds'.<sup>18</sup> They made their first hire when a squadron commander 'had located a woman who might be able to do the job' and '[a]fter coffee, she agreed to a salary of 200 Deutschmarks'.<sup>19</sup> As the battalion became aware of the risks to interpreters who remained in their own homes and were vulnerable to intimidation by local forces, they started to be put up in houses UNPROFOR had rented in Vitez for officers' accommodation – at 600 Deutschmarks a month when the local average monthly wage was 100 Deutschmarks. The owners of the captains' house had apparently moved into their cowshed so that they could rent out their home.<sup>20</sup> One of the Cheshires' interpreters, Dobrila Kolaba, had initially stayed living with her parents in Novi Travnik and travelling every day to the Vitez base. The officers found her space in their accommodation, but despite the precautions she was murdered – 'deliberately targeted', Stewart suspected – by a sniper in July 1993.<sup>21</sup>

The British battalions needed even more interpreters as the conflict went on and British commanders refined their understanding of the UNPROFOR mandate to secure the passage of aid convoys. The British approach, pioneered by Stewart, was to conduct intensive liaison with the so-called 'warring factions' and negotiate local ceasefires to let the convoys through (UK troops would apply a similarly robust understanding to their mission to guarantee the UN Safe Area of Goražde in 1994–95). By 1993–94, when the 1st Battalion, Duke of Wellington's Regiment (1 DWR), was based in Bugojno (another town in central Bosnia), the battalion employed 41 interpreters, of whom some were refugees from elsewhere. The British military interpreter who recruited and managed the interpreters' cell there, Captain Louise Robbins, remembered:

they'd come from, you know, they'd been driven out of other places, and in Bugojno [...] it was all shelled out, there were um, Bosnian Muslims living in

Serbs' houses, cause they'd been driven out, and there were Serbs living in Bosnian Muslims' houses, cause they'd been driven out, but this crowd of wonderful, mainly young people [...] they were a hotch-potch of um Serb, er, Bosnian Muslim, Croatian, mixtures, and they were all friends. You know, to them they were young, it didn't matter. Um. But to others it, it would.<sup>22</sup>

In this physically, socially and economically devastated area, demand for employment with the peacekeeping force was high. 'You only have to tell one person locally that there's someone giving work,' Robbins remembered, 'and you're fighting them off at the door.'<sup>23</sup> When young people arrived at the camp gate and said they could speak English, they were interviewed to make sure that they actually could do so and then put through a United Nations testing process (including translation between English and the local language(s) in both directions) so that they could obtain a personnel number and ID card. UNPROFOR required that interpreters were aged 18 years or more and only allowed one member of each family to have a job with the UN – although applicants could circumvent this requirement by answering 'no' in the relevant section of the form.

Interpreters had the legal status of UNPROFOR employees, unlike other locally-hired civilians such as cleaners, mechanics, laundry assistants or kitchen hands. The Dutch battalions stationed in Srebrenica had had to recruit their non-UNPROFOR employees through the local town council ('opština'). The opština attempted to monopolize recruitment for jobs with peacekeepers and NGOs, limited the amount of time one person could be employed with such organizations and preselected candidates for employment, privileging existing residents over refugees who had arrived in Srebrenica and were in even more need of work.<sup>24</sup> UNPROFOR legal status did not exempt interpreters from interference by the local authorities. In 1994, one town's

mayor told UN civilian staff that paying the interpreters at the regular UN rate would unbalance the local economy and asked for half their salaries to be paid to the opština so that he could supply the interpreters with food. The UN representatives agreed, to the disgust of officers in the battalion where the interpreters worked. Interpreters from Srebrenica, Goražde and Pale have reported more direct harassment by the local authorities in order to set them up as an intelligence source or to obstruct the peacekeepers.<sup>25</sup>

The UN end of the recruitment process for interpreters did not appear well adapted to the realities of the war zone. To obtain an ID card required a photograph, which refugees who had fled with nothing might well not have. One interviewee remembered applicants having to cut their own faces out of precious family photographs and, on one occasion, a civilian clerk melting an interpreter's only photograph in a laminator. The problem was overcome when somebody acquired a Polaroid camera. The translation tests were processed and graded further up the line by United Nations staff, and the grade achieved determined the rate of pay. On occasion, the testing process fell foul of the ethnicized language politics in BiH. If the marker was a Croat, Serbianisms in the text might be marked down, even though they were naturally part of the linguist's idiolect and/or were appropriate for the area in which the linguist would be operating.<sup>26</sup>

The officer in charge of interpreters within a battalion was also responsible for equipping them. 1 DWR required every patrol to have an interpreter on the grounds that, without communicating with the locals, the infantry could not perform its primary role of dominating the ground and gathering intelligence. This policy contrasted with the Dutch approach to patrols during the UNPROFOR period, where an interpreter would usually not be taken even on the 'social patrols' which aimed to 'take the pulse' of the civilian population through informal conversations – although by 1999 the Dutch troops

in SFOR were 'often' taking an interpreter on social patrols.<sup>27</sup> Given the constant risk of sniper fire while outdoors, obtaining protective equipment for civilian interpreters was a matter of survival. Louise Robbins found she had to negotiate with the battalion quartermaster for flak jackets and helmets and protested that '[y]ou can't send soldiers out with flak jackets on and protection and the interpreters without, 'cause a bullet will go straight through them, you know, it's not fair.' Military clothing reduced the risk of an interpreter being picked out by snipers, but their difference could never be concealed:

with the best will in the world those interpreters were never going to look like soldiers. They didn't walk like soldiers, they didn't do their jacket up, I, I used to tell them every morning, for goodness sake, you want to look like us, do your combat jacket up, do your laces up properly, tuck your, tuck your trousers in, tie your hair back, you're a target. And they didn't carry weapons of course, which was the other obvious giveaway.

Female interpreters tended to stand out even further:

You know, the girls won't tie their hair back into a tight bun, it's not glamorous.

Ultimately, no amount of precautions could be foolproof. For instance, it was not unknown for the breastplates in interpreters' flak jackets to be sold on, even though the battalion inventoried them as expensive 'starred items' and investigated any disappearances.

The understanding of the Bosnian conflict as an ethnic or ethno-religious war – an understanding which the elites of the groups involved in the conflict and the

international policy-makers who saw themselves as alleviating or preventing it collaborated to produce – required hiring interpreters from the three different ethnicities in order to liaise with Croat, Serb and Muslim interlocutors. For these purposes, interpreters who had a mixed family background and/or had identified themselves before the war as ‘Yugoslav’ would find themselves classified into one of three ethnic groups. The practice showed yet another dimension of the ‘war on ambiguity which accompanied and legitimated the physical conflict in BiH, but was necessary to ensure the interpreters’ safety and also to reassure the military forces they would be liaising with. Louise Robbins quickly learned ‘not to send a Bosnian Muslim to the Serb confrontation line to interpret at a meeting, because they [...] couldn’t interpret because they thought they were going to be shot.’<sup>28</sup> A Bosniak interpreter on the same team did, however, volunteer to accompany a convoy through VRS lines into the Bosniak enclave of Goražde. Guards at a VRS checkpoint refused to let him through because his ID bore an obviously Muslim name, and Robbins ‘had to find another volunteer to go, who was of the right ethnicity, right religion.’<sup>29</sup>

The risks of encountering the forces which opposed those of one’s ‘own’ ethnicity were manifested during the fall of Srebrenica, when a Bosniak interpreter who had been hired to work inside the enclave accompanied a Dutch UN military observer to a meeting with the VRS’s general, Ratko Mladić. Mladić accused him of having been in the (Bosniak) army and alluded to the risk that a VRS soldier might go mad and shoot him, at which the interpreter fled. In Potočari, where one Dutch company was based, Mladić later confronted another interpreter who had in fact fought against the VRS and threatened to shoot any more Bosniak interpreters sent to him by the Dutch.<sup>30</sup> Interpreters’ fears of encountering the opposing army were not immediately assuaged by the peace agreement. A US newspaper reporter recalled that in 1996, shortly after the

arrival of IFOR, he and the female Bosniak interpreter who worked for him drove up to a point on the Inter-Ethnic Boundary Line where there had been a VRS checkpoint a few days before:

[S]he gripped the steering wheel and she looked at us and she said, you would bring me this close? And I said, oh no no no, they're gone. And she wasn't even listening, she was furious, and she was shaking. And all of a sudden you began to know what they meant by rape is a weapon. And... and she didn't talk to us the rest of the way back to Tuzla, and we had to promise her that we would never take her close to Serbs again.<sup>31</sup>

Stories such as this illustrate the difficulties in achieving one of the main and unfulfilled goals of the 'international community', the return of refugees to areas where they had been or would be an ethnic minority. As late as 2000, a Serb linguist working for SFOR in Banja Luka who was offered a job two pay grades higher in another SFOR office refused the promotion because it would have meant moving to Sarajevo, although apparently did move there some years later.<sup>32</sup>

A young person's employment with an UNPROFOR unit (or an international organization) often reconfigured the family dynamic, where the children in the family unit – sometimes on an enforced break from university or even fresh from secondary school – would find themselves supporting their own parents and often members of their extended family. Many, but not all, interpreters were women, hence their role as breadwinner reversed gender as well as age relations within a family. Fewer men of the same age were available for employment because men were liable to conscription, yet some men fought willingly and others less so. Working for an international employer

provided an alternative and (somewhat) safer environment, as long as the employer could stand up to the relevant army's demands to free up men of military age for the front. The UK military linguist Miloš Stanković wrote that a male interpreter employed by the Cheshires (whose parents were Bosnian Muslim and therefore he too was ethnically classified as one, although he would have preferred to think of himself as a Yugoslav) had served in a Bosniak army unit early in the war. In Stanković's account of their conversation, the interpreter remembered that during a Croat attack on his trench at Novi Travnik he had 'just cowered in the trench and thought "f\*\*\* this" [original retains expletive]... that's why I'm an interpreter.'<sup>33</sup>

Working as an interpreter could enable one to partially detach oneself from participating in violence. Simultaneously, it could provide a way of directly supporting a particular group in the conflict. The Dutch battalions at Srebrenica widely suspected that certain interpreters also worked as informants for the Bosniak army (ABiH) – but despite these security fears interpreters and local women employed as cleaners still had access to the battalion and company operations room, where they were able to observe timetables, rosters, a logbook, an outgoing mailbag and a waste-paper bin full of envelopes with the return addresses of soldiers' family members (evidently, the risk was not judged sufficient for soldiers to be tasked as cleaners).<sup>34</sup> In Croatia, some Croats who responded to the European Community Monitor Mission (ECMM) advertisement for translators did so because they themselves wanted to present the Croatian side of the war to the international monitors for whom they were translating the experiences of victims and refugees. In practice, however, they found that they could not reconcile the 'positions of the witness and the translator' and had either to adopt the professional subjectivity of neutrality or the witness's subjectivity of testimony.<sup>35</sup>

British soldiers were able and likely to socialize with interpreters off-duty, although rules on fraternization varied between national contingents and the experience of working for a UK battalion may not have been representative of every UNPROFOR interpreter's experience. One strand of a memoir by Lieutenant Monty Woolley, an officer in B Squadron, 9th/12th Lancers, concerns his close but platonic relationship with an interpreter called Majda, the daughter of the mayor of Tuzla. B Squadron was initially stationed in Vitez with the Cheshires, at around the time when interpreters were coming to live on the base. On 9 January 1993, Woolley wrote in his diary that a fellow lieutenant:

has invited three female interpreters to live in the subaltern's house. They claim to have been displaced from their own homes. Consequently I could not get into the bathroom tonight and when the electricity came on at 0600 hours the house fuses were immediately blown by Layla's hair drier. I had to have a cold water shave again. Thank goodness I am leaving tomorrow.<sup>36</sup>

Once Woolley had left Vitez for Tuzla, however, he himself socialized frequently with two local women who worked for the British as interpreters, Majda and her friend Sandra. He recalls that '[f]ar from [being] unattractive anyway, the girls were becoming more desirable with every day we spent separated from our normal peacetime lives',<sup>37</sup> though also relates taking care not to let the relationship go further than a back rub. Many other flirtations did, however, lead to a sexual relationship between a male soldier and a local female interpreter. Louise Robbins recalled that she:

struggled to keep the women interpreters out of bed with the soldiers. Er, it's inevitable, war does funny things to you, um, but where women were married to Serb army commanders, [sex was] not a good idea. Soldiers don't care, out on patrol, they do their best to get her in a, get her in a shelled-out building, um... and the girls are up for it, cause you know, they might get something out of it.<sup>38</sup>

British accounts of peacekeeping in BiH are usually tinged with respect and even tenderness towards interpreters. A more critical picture of a relationship between UN troops and local interpreters, in a contingent where different standing orders applied, appears in the Netherlands Institute for War Documentation's report into the activities of the Dutch battalions in the Srebrenica enclave before and during the catastrophic attack by the Bosnian Serb army (VRS) in July 1995. Here, the interpreters – who in this case seemed mainly to be male – perceived a 'deep gulf' between themselves and the Dutch soldiers. One resented the fact that he had not received a sleeping bag or food during a visit to an observation post and generally felt that 'he was considered to be a sort of translation machine', while others called the Dutch soldiers 'showboys' for their smart clothes, hair and vehicles. Interestingly, the report suggests this relationship may have improved when the VRS blocked the Dutch supply lines and the international soldiers were subject to the same shortages and constraints which had characterized everyday life in the enclave since the outbreak of war. Contacts between troops and the local population were more and more tightly restricted during the three Dutch tours in Srebrenica as the commanders' security concerns increased and the relationship with the local authorities worsened.<sup>39</sup> Clearly, further research is needed to give a fuller account of locals' experiences as interpreters in different contingents, places and periods.

*After Dayton: IFOR and SFOR (1995–2000)*

The signing of the Dayton peace agreement in December 1995 brought about institutional as well as practical changes in interpreters' working lives. UNPROFOR was replaced by a NATO-commanded force, first called the Implementation Force (IFOR) and then, after a year, the Stabilization Force (SFOR). The peacekeeping forces already in BiH removed UN insignia, painted vehicles in camouflage colours instead of UN white and adopted more robust rules of engagement, intended to show that NATO would back up the Dayton agreement with force. Interpreters too remained in their jobs, and more had to be hired as the full complement of IFOR troops arrived. Recruitment procedures differed depending on whether one was employed by a national contingent or the multinational force's headquarters. National contingents' employees came under whatever testing, pay, discipline and training arrangements that country's armed forces had made for local staff (human resources support for British employees was provided by logistics personnel at the Banja Luka Metal Factory base). The headquarters, which also covered branches at several other locations in BiH and two logistics bases in Croatia, recruited locals through a Civilian Personnel Office but lacked a systematized management structure for interpreters until several years into SFOR's presence.

The experience of 2 Light Infantry (2 LI), the British battalion which served in BiH between October 1995 and April 1996, provides a snapshot of the changeover from UNPROFOR to IFOR – although in this case transition seems to have had little impact on the working lives of its interpreters. 2 LI employed some 40 interpreters, enough for each patrol and platoon. These locals, as usual, tended to be university-educated or students who had (still) not resumed their studies. Some had been recruited by previous British battalions and had kept on working for whichever battalion had rotated in. Most

were female, and '[m]ost had become the breadwinner in their family' on their wage of US \$ 800 per month (approximately 1100–1200 Deutschmarks at 1995–96 rates). They 'wore British uniform, without badges or head dress', and, according to the battalion commander, Ben Barry, 'could not resist doing everything they could to make themselves as attractive as possible' – although '[l]eadership and self-discipline' apparently prevented the soldiers 'allow[ing] the attractive female interpreters to be more than just people who translated.' The battalion continued to task interpreters according to their ethnic origin as well as their skill level, which Barry presented as a mark of respect for the security concerns of the 'faction leaders' he met as well as a mitigation of the intelligence risk.<sup>40</sup>

Local interpreters' working lives could change every six months as battalions rotated in and out: the locals had to adapt to the ways different commanders chose to run their bases (for instance, altered security regimes) and get to know a different military supervisor (the junior officer, usually a logistician or an attached educator, who gave them tasks and handled discipline) every time. The period soon after a rotation was also when locals were most likely to transcend the role of facilitator and become impromptu cultural and political advisers to the military, e.g. when counselling liaison officers on the best way to achieve positive results in meetings with the local mayor. The most significant changes in locals' working lives, however, came when one national contingent was replaced by another or the multinational force chose to draw down troops from an area altogether. A change of national contingent meant that, under NATO policy, locals' pay rates (set by the contributing army) were also subject to change. Around Dobož and Maglaj, British troops were replaced first by Danes and later by Poles in the late 1990s. A senior British officer recalled that the transition from Danish to Polish employers had involved a significant pay cut for local interpreters (the

Danish army had maintained a high level of pay), before SFOR pulled out of the area altogether and the remaining interpreters were left unemployed, with no redeployment system.<sup>41</sup>

Local interpreters directly employed by the SFOR headquarters organisation, on the other hand, saw their recruitment, evaluation and training arrangements significantly changed in the late 1990s with the introduction of a centralized professional language service. The changes began in 1998, when the chief of staff at the Sarajevo headquarters asked a senior linguist at NATO's European military headquarters (SHAPE) to visit BiH and recommend ways of improving linguistic support. The linguist, who compared his role to that of a 'management consultant' when interviewed in 2009, found that few if any of the local interpreters had had professional training as linguists and that many had not even been properly assessed. After visiting ten SFOR locations (including three support sites in Croatia), he recommended the establishment of a centralized linguistic service which would be run by two experienced professional civilian linguists who were native speakers of English, replacing the many non-linguist military supervisors scattered around the headquarters organization. The heads of the new linguistic service would revise translations in order to provide on-the-job training and quality control, job descriptions would be written so that managers could assess what qualifications were required for each job, and existing staff would be evaluated to make sure they met the new standards. The review identified 54 posts for local nationals, 23 in a central pool in Sarajevo and 31 at those SFOR offices which would remain open after a drawdown of troops. In September 2000, 48 locally employed linguists were tested for the positions. Eight or ten had their rolling three-month contracts terminated after poor test results, while the rest were given longer contracts and assigned to jobs on the basis of their qualifications and professional experience. A further manpower and organization review

in February 2001 recommended 44 linguist positions overall, with sixteen located in the central office (including the two ‘internationals’) and the remainder in other towns or other Sarajevo offices.<sup>42</sup>

The adage ‘traduttore–tradittore’ (Italian for ‘translator–traitor’), usually applied to the idea that a translator can never remain entirely faithful to a source text, takes on sinister overtones in conflict situations (an observation made by several of this author’s colleagues). Local interpreters are still situated in their family and community, emotionally if not physically, while forming part (admittedly an unarmed, somewhat differently dressed part) of a foreign military force which has different interests and objectives. A British language trainer felt that, despite the significant advantages of employing native speakers as linguists, the practice also brought two disadvantages. First, native speakers (whether locals or émigrés) might feel that the extremely direct phrasing of a British interlocutor should not be put that way, and second, they would also ‘normally bring some form of baggage [...] in terms of values, [or] contacts.’<sup>43</sup> Their ‘baggage’ might include personal conflicts, family matters, blackmail pressures or even plans for revenge. Employers also had to be aware of the risk an interpreter might communicate with local intelligence services. This participant in fact argued the risk had become even more acute in later conflicts when interpreters could have access to personal communications devices even while living on base. The Bosnian Croat intelligence service (SNS), for one, was known to have actively attempted to recruit interpreters after an SFOR raid in October 1999 uncovered details of four operations targeting international organizations.<sup>44</sup> Even after Dayton, there was a continued need for peacekeeping forces to supplement their local linguist workforce with personnel from their own ranks.

## **Interpreters from troop-contributing nations**

Michael Cronin's distinction between 'autonomous' and 'heteronomous' methods of recruiting interpreters in a colonial context has already been applied to ex-Yugoslavia by Mia Dragović-Drouet. In an autonomous system, 'colonizers train their own subjects in the language or languages of the colonized', whereas in a heteronomous system local interpreters were taught 'the imperial language' instead.<sup>45</sup> One may, of course, dispute whether the colonial comparison is appropriate (and it is beyond the scope of this article to engage with Gerald Knaus and Felix Martin's controversial critique of the international administration in BiH as an analogue of the British Raj in India<sup>46</sup>), yet the distinction between recruitment systems reminds the historian that either choice would introduce certain skill sets, conceptual frameworks and loyalties into the interpretation process. Since so few people in the UNPROFOR troop-contributing nations spoke the languages used in BiH, in practice most interpreter recruitment was heteronomous.<sup>47</sup> However, the peacekeeping forces did also train some of their own personnel to speak the languages as well as sending heritage speakers to BiH.

The foreign military forces in BiH arguably had more need to language-train their own personnel than other international organizations, which did not deal with classified information (therefore did not require security-cleared translation or listening staff) and which were less likely to encounter extreme danger. Military interpreters and (perhaps their gradual replacements) international civilian contractors were a necessary supplement to local staff, although the particular circumstances of the BiH theatre required militaries to rethink their handling of language support. During the Second World War and the Cold War, most military linguists had been trained as interrogators and/or communications intelligence analysts. Interrogation was not a core military task

in BiH, since – unlike the aftermath of the Second World War – war crimes investigation was the responsibility of an international civilian court, not the military. Military interpreters in the field spent most of their time on operational tasks in situations where it would be unsafe or unreliable to send a local.

When the Yugoslav conflict broke out, the British Army appears to have had only three heritage speakers of the local language(s). According to a memoir by one of them, Miloš Stanković, the UN had at first refused to allow personnel with ex-Yugoslav family backgrounds to serve as observers for the same reasons of neutrality that personnel of Greek or Turkish origin would not have been allowed to operate in similar roles in Cyprus.<sup>48</sup> As the UK prepared to send an entire battalion to UNPROFOR and procedures changed, all three heritage speakers were asked to become military interpreters for the British force. The three men were all from a Serb background. Two had family in the Krajina region of Croatia, which had been taken over by a Serb militia, whereas Stanković's father came from Mrčajevci, a village in central Serbia (more famous for producing the celebrated singer of Serbian newly-composed folk music, Miroslav Ilić). For security reasons, the interpreters' real identities were concealed and they were assigned the non-Slavic pseudonyms of 'Nick Abbott', 'Nick Costello' and 'Mike Stanley' – this last denoting Stanković, who angrily observes that he had initially been asked to deploy as 'Captain Laurel'.<sup>49</sup> For military interpreters to be marked as members of a particular ethnicity would have removed the appearance of neutrality which enabled them to take part in contacts with all three armies. It would also expose them to the same risks that local interpreters faced on the 'wrong' side of the ethnic lines.

The Army's experience with its three heritage speakers was mixed. 'Abbott', a corporal in the Royal Anglian Regiment, was apparently withdrawn from the theatre

after three months when the Bosnian Croat army (HVO) discovered his background and threatened his life.<sup>50</sup> ‘Costello’ served in BiH for two years and other British officers’ memoirs praise his service frequently. He was awarded the Queen’s Gallantry Medal in 1993 for his actions during an evacuation of civilians from Konjević Polje, remained in the Army and by 2008, when he spoke at a special service commemorating British troops’ service in BiH, had reverted to his real name, Nick Ilić.<sup>51</sup> Stanković was assigned to interpret for Brigadier Andrew Cumming at the British support base in Split, then for the Cheshires in central Bosnia and later for General Sir Michael Rose in Sarajevo when Rose assumed command of the UN force in BiH. He felt unsuited to the memorization skills required of an interpreter<sup>52</sup> – corroboration of one professional interpreter’s unrelated observation that language proficiency is only one aspect of interpretation skills<sup>53</sup> – so resolved to carve out a wider role as a liaison officer. He eventually became a liaison between the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and the VRS office at the Lukavica barracks near Sarajevo airport, where he had to establish a close rapport with the VRS liaison officer, a counter-intelligence specialist named Milenko Inđić, in order to ensure the distribution of UN aid convoys. While in Sarajevo, Stanković also participated in an unofficial operation to evacuate civilians across the siege line. He returned to the UK in April 1995, but his career ended acrimoniously when the Ministry of Defence police arrested him on charges of espionage in 1997. He was later cleared of the charges and sued the police force for compensation, although a judge dismissed the case in 2007.<sup>54</sup>

A more realistic method of providing language support for tasks which local civilian interpreters could not be asked to do was to give non-heritage-speaker personnel three to five months of intensive training and then deploy them for six months as military colloquial speakers or interpreters. The courses, held at the Defence School of

Languages in Beaconsfield, contained participants ‘from lance-corporals through to major’ whose personnel records showed an aptitude for languages, in most cases a degree but sometimes A levels. Some, but not all, had previous knowledge of another Slavonic language, Russian. Personnel from many ‘different arms and corps’ of the Services were chosen for the courses, with the Royal Army Educational Corps and the Royal Corps of Signals particularly well-represented. The RAEC, which had just been amalgamated into the Adjutant General’s Corps as the Education and Training Service, was apparently keen to increase its profile by sending personnel on operations, whereas the Signals had classified intelligence responsibilities which required linguists. Military interpreters took on rewarding and essential tasks but were detached from their own units and could not fully participate in the practices of re-affirming battalion and regimental identity which formed an important part of British military culture. As one remarked:

the plight of... military interpreters is, we get, not literally, but parachuted in. We get plucked out of our wherever we are, our education centres or whatever we’re, job we’re doing, and dumped in a whole environment with people that we’ve never met before [...] they already had their friendships, their protocols, and here we were, these odd people who had different cap badges [...] And at the end of the operation you’re parachuted or airlifted back out, plonked back in your education centre, never to see any of these people again. And so you can’t say, um, oh do you remember when we got shot at, do you remember when we were ambushed, it doesn’t happen. [...] you get dumped in and then you get dumped out again.<sup>55</sup>

Judging by the information in the Srebrenica report, British battalions were better equipped with military interpreters than were their Dutch counterparts. The first Dutch

battalion, which arrived in 1994, only acquired a military interpreter after its commanding officer had found that, with only Bosniak interpreters available inside the enclave, he could not make contact with the VRS. An army interpreter, Paul Lindgreen, was duly sent from the Netherlands and was able to assist the designated liaison officer as well as to interpret in a narrow sense. After returning, he also prepared a lessons-learned report on interpretation and cultural training. In Srebrenica, however, the level of direct language support from the Dutch army declined after Lindgreen's departure. His replacement in the second battalion, 'a Dutch soldier who spoke Serbo-Croat and could interpret', was not quite so experienced, while the commander of the third and last Dutch battalion had apparently tried and failed to have a military interpreter sent at all.<sup>56</sup> The Dutch army admittedly had fewer troop commitments in BiH than the British and had nothing like so many high-ranking officers at headquarters who required language support. Even at the battalion level, however, the Dutch approach to peacekeeping which minimized contact with the local population went hand in hand with a lower requirement for interpreters. The third Dutch battalion had four interpreters,<sup>57</sup> whereas the Cheshires had employed 15 and 1 DWR, a year later, had had 41.

Troop numbers surged when IFOR arrived in BiH in December 1995 but were then reduced to below UNPROFOR levels from late 1996 onwards as IFOR changed to SFOR. This reduced troop-contributing nations' commitments as a whole but not necessarily the need for military interpreters. Since many contributing armies had been involved in BiH for several years, they had rather more 'military colloquial speakers' of the local language(s) than they had had at the start of the operation and could sometimes use them to supplement or replace local interpreters in tasks such as liaison visits.<sup>58</sup> Thus Captain Paul Sulyok, a liaison officer with 2 LI, had already been trained in

‘Serbo-Croat’. He had served a tour in Goražde in 1994–95 and was able to contribute to the battalion’s pre-deployment training for platoon commanders.<sup>59</sup>

Although after Dayton personal safety considerations far less often precluded the use of a local civilian interpreter, security restrictions still imposed a need for some linguists to be recruited from outside BiH (also a potential problem in public service interpreting). Local nationals could not get security clearances because they were not citizens of an SFOR country and were all in a sense considered to come from one of the Bosnian ‘factions’. Indeed, SFOR was therefore unable to provide linguistic support for any classified material until it employed the two British staff to manage its new centralized linguistic service in 2000.<sup>60</sup> Most UK civilian and military defence staff would have a ‘secret’ clearance, awarded on the basis of background checks with the Ministry of Defence, the UK security services, the police and credit reference agencies. ‘Top secret’ clearance, which additionally involved a security interview and several character references, was required for members of ‘sensitive units’ such as the Intelligence Corps.<sup>61</sup> Reliable background checks could not be carried out for staff of non-SFOR nationalities, since it was considered that their governments might have their own reasons to return a favourable result.

The US Army arrived in BiH with IFOR in December 1995 and used its own military interpreters for certain duties, such as liaison with the Russian base at Ugljevik, within the US zone. Preparations for deployment included mobilising 3,800 reservists and introducing so-called ‘Turbo Serbo’ courses, a conversion course for existing Russian linguists.<sup>62</sup> The US contingent contained a larger intelligence component than other countries’ contributions: its intelligence activities focused on psychological and information operations and intelligence-gathering for force protection, plus, one may assume, covert activity. Many of the extra military linguists came from the 300th

Military Intelligence Brigade (Linguist), a National Guard brigade based in Utah. The brigade – which apparently owed its Utah location to the fact that so many Utahns had learned foreign languages and lived abroad as Mormon missionaries – supplied five-member teams to ‘plug into’ other units as required, but an audit in 1994 had revealed that 78 per cent of the teams (across all languages) were understaffed and 73 per cent of teams had at least one underskilled member.<sup>63</sup> Shortages of linguists would become even more acute in 2001, when the aftermath of 9/11 and the US interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq suddenly required a much higher volume of linguists who spoke Arabic and the Afghan languages of Pashtu and Dari.

The US force kept up with SFOR’s increasing emphasis on civilianization and increasingly relied on civilian interpreters contracted from the US for tasks which locals were not allowed to do. A contract agency, TRW Incorporated (later Northrop Grumman), recruited civilians as linguists for the US Army. These civilians fell into three categories, I (locally recruited, with no security clearance; most interpreters belonged to this category), II (‘secret’ clearance) and III (‘top secret’ clearance). In BiH, TRW administered the recruitment and testing of Category I local interpreters who would be contracted to TRW and work with the US forces. It also recruited the Category II and III linguists in the US, typically from the relevant diaspora communities. TRW recruiters would ‘focus on known concentrations of people having the target language’ and recruit through acquaintances, newspaper and radio advertising and word of mouth. Approximately half of all applicants would be rejected after initial screening (medical and security checks and a check for US citizenship) and another half of those remaining would fail the language testing.

The successful applicants received training in ‘military culture’ and force protection at Fort Benning, in order ‘to prepare the interpreters for life in a combat zone and Army

life'. They then took on a number of intelligence tasks in theatre, including field human intelligence, listening in on voice transmissions, translating classified documents and being present at local employee screenings and prisoner interrogations. A report by three US intelligence officers and military interpreters who had served in BiH and Kosovo presented several recommendations for tasking interpreters effectively, including the observation that 'interpreters working in interrogation operations [...] become known to the prisoners as part of the unfriendly side of the Peace Force' and should not be sent out with teams which were 'trying to build trust and confidence in a sector'. Only Category II and III interpreters could wear a US flag on their uniform. The intelligence officers' report also recommended that the security-cleared interpreters should not share living quarters with the locals.<sup>64</sup> Such measures, which signalled the contractors' different status (effectively, a higher status) in everyday, 'banal' ways, implicitly enforced a separation between civilian contractors and locals, potentially preventing the emergence of a common identity as 'linguist'.

## **Conclusion**

The individuals who facilitated conversations during meetings, patrols or interrogations, who advised their military employers or fellow soldiers about the history, culture and society of the area and who acted as fixers and liaisons in roles which sometimes went well beyond a narrow definition of 'language support' were universally referred to in military and journalistic English as 'interpreters'. Very few of them, however, would have been trained or classified as interpreters (or translators) according to the standards of the profession itself. Experienced professional translators from former Yugoslavia were recruited very quickly, so language teachers were the next best option for an

employer seeking local ‘interpreters’, although there was no guarantee they would be competent in translation or interpretation skills.<sup>65</sup> As the provision of language support for peacekeeping in BiH moved from desperation to professionalization, some local staff were able to accumulate cultural and social capital within the ‘field’ of the linguistic profession. Professional advancement as a linguist was more difficult for military linguists from the troop-contributing nations, where career structures for linguists tended to relate only to intelligence work rather than the emerging idea of ‘operational language support’, which was only in its infancy – if that – during the BiH period.

The experience of peacekeeping in BiH, combined with NATO’s mid-1990s preparations to incorporate central and eastern European states in several rounds of enlargement, nonetheless began to lead some military planners to give languages more consideration – although their policies and practices would be revised again after the forces’ first engagements in Iraq and Afghanistan in the early 2000s. NATO’s Ad Hoc Group on Cooperation in Peacekeeping recommended in 1997 that NATO members provide their soldiers with more training in the common language of the mission (effectively, in English) and also in the local language:

There is a need for a common language capability among units deployed on missions. This is essential to both the execution of the mission and the day-to-day administration of deployed forces. [...] With regard to local language capability, access to competent interpreters and translators is required as an integral part of the mission, since it may not be possible, or desirable, to rely entirely on locally-recruited staff for these roles.<sup>66</sup>

However, no force was able to commit the resources in personnel, money and time it would have taken to meet all its language support needs internally, producing a constant demand for locals to work as linguists.

The extreme pay differentials between employees of international organizations and their neighbours remained a characteristic of life in BiH long after the Dayton agreement. Rijad Bahić, a local interpreter employed by TRW to work at the US base in Tuzla, had been conscripted by the ABiH at the age of 19 after finishing secondary school in 1994. Several of his friends had died in May 1995 when the VRS shelled the town centre, killing 71 young civilians. He had been demobilized after the Dayton agreement and was quickly hired by TRW. In 2001, he was paid US \$1000 a month, while his neurologist brother-in-law earned half as much and the average wage in the Tuzla area was approximately US \$200.<sup>67</sup> The tension between injecting money into the local economy and causing a brain drain of qualified professionals was recognised by SFOR staff. A British logistics major, Mark Gore, who in 1999 was in charge of civilian recruitment for all British units within one of SFOR's three zones (Multi-National Division South-West, where Britain was the lead nation) explained that the average wage for a school teacher was around 300 Deutschmarks per month, yet:

If he speaks English and we employ him, his wage will be multiplied by at least three. On one hand he will increase his consumption, but on the other, he will pull someone useful out off [sic] the school. And that is only one example.

Therefore we have to find a balance.<sup>68</sup>

According to Robert Barry, the US diplomat who led the Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe (OSCE) mission to BiH, more should have been done to prevent a brain drain of local professionals into employment with the 'internationals'

which ultimately damaged the Bosnian public sphere. Barry wrote in a lessons-learned document for *Helsinki Monitor* during the crisis in Kosovo:

We should not let the international agencies and NGOs coming to Kosovo do what they did in Bosnia – bid against each other for qualified local staff. Doing so results in people who should be the judges and editors becoming the drivers and interpreters at wages higher than cabinet ministers receive.<sup>69</sup>

However, the profession of linguist was a valid option in its own right and locals who wanted to build long-term careers in it might have disputed this equation of their profession with drivers. Such locals – if they worked for the headquarters organization – saw their career prospects advanced by the introduction of a centralized language service under SFOR, which offered a professional development pathway and contemporary western management ideology to the staff directly employed by NATO. Indeed, in 2009 the head of the linguistic services branch at NATO's Sarajevo headquarters was a Bosnian who had originally been a UNPROFOR interpreter.<sup>70</sup> Many other local linguists moved on to work for other organizations, often the International Police Task Force, and some more acquired career opportunities more indirectly by using professional or personal contacts they had made while working with the peacekeeping forces to obtain employment abroad. This included a number of female interpreters who married or struck up a relationship with a foreign soldier and moved to his home country (the author has not yet heard of any male interpreter/female soldier or same-sex relationships). Others yet, however, did regard their jobs as sidelines or interruptions, or stoically viewed the work as a short-term adaptation to (post-)wartime circumstances rather than a lifelong career choice. One woman dismissed by SFOR during the centralization replied 'I've had four great years [...] maybe it's time for me to get serious' when her manager broke the news to her.<sup>71</sup>

Although the system of employing local interpreters was problematic, alternatives might have been even more so. Warnings about local employees' hard-currency salaries unbalancing the economy served the purposes, intentionally or not, both of organizations seeking to cut costs and of unscrupulous opština officials – yet real equality between the 'Local Civilian Hires' and 'International Civilian Contractors' would have required sufficiently skilled locals to have been paid even more and insufficiently skilled locals to be given access to the training required to open up the higher pay grades. Time-limiting individuals' employment terms, a policy the opština had enforced in Srebrenica (although not for interpreters), would have restricted their career progression (once that concept had been introduced into their working lives) and deprived the battalions which rotated into and out of 'theatre' every six months of staff who were more or less familiar with military working practices. Employment was in any case shared out among families, although the one-family-member policy could not be perfectly enforced. Besides, the definition of 'family' for UN purposes may not have accorded with the local understandings of extended family, cousin networks and semi-familial best-man/godfather relationships ('kumstvo') which formed part of the concept of 'family' in BiH.

The image of the translator, interpreter or linguist as a neutral facilitator of communication between cultures does not last long in the case of BiH, nor should it elsewhere. One complication of the neutrality ethic was that military language personnel were deeply involved in achieving military objectives and even local staff were supposed to identify their interests with their military employers'. Well-trained, well-treated, knowledgeable and loyal local interpreters were force multipliers, making small numbers of troops more effective in peace enforcement than larger units without adequate language support: accordingly, treating interpreters with moral and financial

respect maximised a force's chances of success. The ideal of neutrality was undermined on a further level by the realities and stereotypes involved in intercultural contact. Miloš Stanković felt drawn, according to the self-representation in his memoir, towards sentimental relationships with both Bosniak and Serb Sarajevans on the basis of his own background yet resented having to narrate his Serb family's past in order to gain credibility with the VRS. For non-native speakers, especially soldiers whose language training had been minimal or informal, contact with different languages was in large part an encounter with otherness. Dutch soldiers who served in BiH in 1999–2000, several years after Srebrenica, still located themselves in what Liora Sion describes as a 'peacekeeping space' which confirmed their identities as combat-capable masculine soldiers and discouraged them from contact with locals, who were presumed hostile.<sup>72</sup> Lawrence Venuti has argued that the frequent 'invisibility' of the translator reflects 'a complacency in [...] relations with cultural others'.<sup>73</sup> To directly ask about linguists in peacekeeping, in an interview or as the objective of a research project itself, can prompt a respondent to make new conceptual connections, bring out information which had been taken for granted and mark out a field of knowledge as it goes along.

### Acknowledgements

This paper is part of the project 'Languages at War: Policies and Practices of Language Contacts in Conflict', which is funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council. I have benefited immensely from discussions with the other team members (Mike Kelly, Hilary Footitt, Simona Tobia, Greg Tinker and Louise Askew), from attendees' comments at the first Languages at War annual workshop at the Imperial War Museum, from conversations with Padmini Broomfield and from remarks by two anonymous referees. Jelena Obradović-Wochnik made valuable comments on an early stage of the

paper. Most of all, I should thank the interview participants who have contributed to this research and whose identities are protected by pseudonyms.

---

<sup>1</sup> Mark Cornwall, *The undermining of Austria-Hungary: the battle for hearts and minds* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000).

<sup>2</sup> G. R. Berridge, 'English Dragomans and Oriental Secretaries: the Early Nineteenth-Century Origins of the Anglicization of the British Embassy Dragomanat in Constantinople', *Diplomacy and Statecraft* (2003), 14:4, 137–52; E. Natalie Rothman, 'Interpreting Dragomans: Boundaries and Crossings in the Early Modern Mediterranean', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* (2009), 51:4, 771–800. On South Slav dragomans from independent Dubrovnik (Ragusa), see Vesna Miović-Perić, 'Dragomans of the Dubrovnik Republic: their Training and Career', *Dubrovnik Annals* 5 (2001), pp. 81–94.

<sup>3</sup> E.g. Francesca Gaiba, *The origins of simultaneous interpretation: the Nuremberg trial* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1998); Alice Kaplan, *The interpreter* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

<sup>4</sup> E.g. Arthur Page, *Between victor and vanquished: an Australian interrogator in the war against Japan* (Loftus: Australian Military History Publications, 2008); Sandra Ott, 'Duplicity, Indulgence and Ambiguity in Franco-German Relations, 1940–1946', *History and Anthropology* (2009), 20:1, 57–77; Simona Tobia, 'Crime and Judgement: Interpreters/Translators in British War Crimes Trials, 1945–49', *The Translator* (2010, forthcoming), 16:2.

<sup>5</sup> Roger V. Dingman, 'Language at War: U.S. Marine Corps Japanese Language Officers in the Pacific War', *Journal of Military History* (2004), 68:3, 853–83.

<sup>6</sup> Deanne Durrett, *Unsung heroes of World War II: the story of the Navajo code talkers* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009, 2nd ed.); William C. Meadows, *The Comanche code talkers of World War II* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002).

<sup>7</sup> Page, *Between*.

<sup>8</sup> Valentin M. Berezhkov, *At Stalin's side: his interpreter's memoirs from the October Revolution to the fall of the dictator's empire*, trans. Sergei V. Mikheyev (Secaucus, NJ: Carol, 1994); Erwin Weit, *Eyewitness: the autobiography of Gomulka's interpreter*, trans. Mary Schofield (London: Deutsch, 1973); Igor Korchilov, *Translating history: thirty years on the front lines of diplomacy with a top Russian*

---

*interpreter* (New York: Scribner, 1997); Pavai Palazchenko, *My years with Gorbachev and Shevardnadze: the memoir of a Soviet interpreter* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997).

<sup>9</sup> E.g. Kayla Williams, *Love my rifle more than you: young and female in the US Army* (London: Phoenix, 2007).

<sup>10</sup> Bob Stewart, *Broken lives: a personal view of the Bosnian conflict* (London: Harper Collins, 1993), 218.

<sup>11</sup> See V.P. Gagnon, Jr., *The myth of ethnic war: Serbia and Croatia in the 1990s* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004); Xavier Bougarel, Elissa Helms and Ger Duijzings (ed.) *The new Bosnian mosaic: identities, memories and moral claims in a post-war society* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).

<sup>12</sup> See David Campbell, *National deconstruction: violence, identity, and justice in Bosnia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998).

<sup>13</sup> Mona Baker, *Translation and conflict: a narrative account* (London/New York: Routledge, 2006), 26.

<sup>14</sup> Michael Cronin, *Translation and globalization* (London/New York: Routledge), 2.

<sup>15</sup> See Stef Jansen, 'The Privatisation of Home and Hope: Return, Reforms and the Foreign Intervention in Bosnia-Herzegovina', *Dialectical Anthropology*, 30 (2006), 177–199; Kimberley Coles, *Democratic designs: international intervention and electoral practices in postwar Bosnia-Herzegovina* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007).

<sup>16</sup> Andrew Gilbert, 'Foreign Authority and the Politics of Impartiality in Postwar Bosnia-Herzegovina' (PhD thesis, Department of Anthropology, University of Chicago), ch. 6.

<sup>17</sup> Michael Rose, interviewed March 2002 by Lyn Smith, Imperial War Museum (IWM) Sound Archive 22726.

<sup>18</sup> Stewart, *Broken Lives*, 37.

<sup>19</sup> Stewart, *Broken Lives*, 83.

<sup>20</sup> Monty Woolley, *Cleanse their souls: peace-keeping in Bosnia's civil war 1992–1993*, (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Military, 2004), 36.

<sup>21</sup> Stewart, *Broken Lives*, 270–71.

<sup>22</sup> Louise Robbins, interviewed 26 February 2009.

<sup>23</sup> Louise Robbins, interviewed 26 February 2009.

<sup>24</sup> T. Frankfort, 'Peacekeeping and Humanitarian Action', in *Srebrenica: reconstruction, background, consequences and analyses of the fall of a safe area* (Netherlands Institute for War Documentation, 2002), [http://srebrenica.brightside.nl/srebrenica/toc\\_frame.html](http://srebrenica.brightside.nl/srebrenica/toc_frame.html) (accessed 14 July 2009), 8.6.1.

- 
- <sup>25</sup> Emir Suljagić, *Postcards from the grave*, trans. Lelja Haverić (London: Saqi, 2005), 115–16 (Srebrenica); personal interviews.
- <sup>26</sup> Louise Robbins, interviewed 26 February 2009.
- <sup>27</sup> Frankfort, 'Peacekeeping', 8.6.1; Olivier Bureau, 'Social Patrol', *SFOR Informer*, 3 March.
- <sup>28</sup> Louise Robbins, interviewed 26 February 2009.
- <sup>29</sup> Louise Robbins, interviewed 26 February 2009.
- <sup>30</sup> P.C.M. Koedijk, 'July 11: the Flight to Potocari', in *Srebrenica: reconstruction, background, consequences and analyses of the fall of a safe area* (Netherlands Institute for War Documentation, 2002), [http://srebrenica.brightside.nl/srebrenica/toc\\_frame.html](http://srebrenica.brightside.nl/srebrenica/toc_frame.html) (accessed 14 July 2009), 4.30.1.
- <sup>31</sup> Harry Levins, interviewed 28 November 2001 by Lyn Smith, IWM sound archive 22576.
- <sup>32</sup> Confidential interview, 31 March 2009.
- <sup>33</sup> Miloš Stanković, *Trusted mole: a soldier's journey into Bosnia's heart of darkness* (London: Harper Collins, 2000), 102.
- <sup>34</sup> A.E. Kersten, 'Operational Performance of Dutchbat I, II and III in the Safe Area Srebrenica', in *Srebrenica: reconstruction, background, consequences and analyses of the fall of a safe area* (Netherlands Institute for War Documentation, 2002), [http://srebrenica.brightside.nl/srebrenica/toc\\_frame.html](http://srebrenica.brightside.nl/srebrenica/toc_frame.html) (accessed 14 July 2009), 6.5.1.
- <sup>35</sup> Zrinka Stahuljak, 'Violent Distortions: Bearing Witness to the Task of Wartime Translators', *TTR: Traduction, terminologie, redaction*, 13: 1(2000), 37–51, 42–43.
- <sup>36</sup> Woolley, *Cleanse*, 78.
- <sup>37</sup> Woolley, *Cleanse*, 102.
- <sup>38</sup> Louise Robbins, interviewed 26 February 2009.
- <sup>39</sup> Frankfort, 'Peacekeeping', 8.6.2.
- <sup>40</sup> Ben Barry, *A cold war: front line operations in Bosnia 1995–1996* (Stroud: Spellmount, 2008), 70–71.
- <sup>41</sup> 'Coldstreamer', interviewed 18 May 2009.
- <sup>42</sup> Confidential interview, 31 March 2009.
- <sup>43</sup> Confidential interview, 2 March 2009.
- <sup>44</sup> 'Transcript: Op Westar Special Press Conference', <http://nato-otan.de/sfor/trans/1999/t991217a.htm> (accessed 14 July 2009).

---

<sup>45</sup> Michael Cronin, 'The Empire Talks Back: Orality, Heteronomy and the Cultural Turn in Interpreting Studies', in *The Interpreting studies reader*, ed. F. Pöchacker and M. Shlesinger (London: Routledge, 2002), 386–97: 393. Cited at Mila Dragović-Drouet, 'The Practice of Translating and Interpreting During the Conflicts in the Former Yugoslavia (1991–1999)', in *Translating and interpreting conflict*, ed. M. Salama-Carr (Amsterdam/New York: Rodopi, 2007), 29–40: 33.

<sup>46</sup> See Gerald Knaus and Felix Martin, 'Travails of the European Raj', *Journal of Democracy*, 14: 3(2003), 60–74; Coles, *Designs*, 42–44.

<sup>47</sup> Dragović-Drouet, 'Practice', 33–34.

<sup>48</sup> Stanković, *Mole*, 45–46.

<sup>49</sup> Stanković, *Mole*, 58.

<sup>50</sup> Stanković, *Mole*, 33.

<sup>51</sup> 'Bosnia Commemorative Service Tickets Available',

<http://www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/DefenceNews/DefencePolicyAndBusiness/BosniaCommemorativeServiceTicketsAvailable.htm> (accessed 14 July 2009).

<sup>52</sup> Stanković, *Mole*, 238–239.

<sup>53</sup> Confidential interview, 31 March 2009.

<sup>54</sup> Richard Norton-Taylor, 'Former Major Faces Huge Bill for Failed Action', *The Guardian*, 10 November 2007.

<sup>55</sup> Louise Robbins, interviewed 26 February 2009.

<sup>56</sup> Frankfort, 'Peacekeeping', 8.22.1.

<sup>57</sup> Koedijk, 'Flight', 4.31.2.

<sup>58</sup> Douglas Chalmers, *Faction liaison teams: a peacekeeping multiplier* (Fort Leavenworth: School of Advanced Military Studies, 2001), 24.

<sup>59</sup> Barry, *Cold War*, 45, 54.

<sup>60</sup> Confidential interview, 31 March 2009.

<sup>61</sup> Graham Bound, 'Security Veters Come in from the Cold', *Soldier*, January 1999, 40–41.

<sup>62</sup> Paul Quinn-Judge, 'US Military Steps up Deployment Effort', *Boston Globe*, 5 December 1995, 21.

<sup>63</sup> Lee Davidson, 'Army is Running Low on Proficient Linguists', *Deseret News* (Salt Lake City), 30 July 1996.

- 
- <sup>64</sup> John S. Rovegno, Linda Hajdari and Drita Perezic, 'Interpreters in Intelligence Operations', *Military Intelligence Professional Bulletin*, 29: 4(2003), 25–29.
- <sup>65</sup> Dragović-Drouet, 'Practice', 34.
- <sup>66</sup> Ad Hoc Group on Cooperation in Peacekeeping (1997) 'Lessons Learned in Peacekeeping Operations', [http://152.152.94.201/docu/peacekeeping\\_lessons/peacekeeping-lessons-eng.pdf](http://152.152.94.201/docu/peacekeeping_lessons/peacekeeping-lessons-eng.pdf) (accessed 14 July 2009), 23.
- <sup>67</sup> Stella M. Hopkins, 'Interpreter Translates for Peace', *Charlotte Observer*, 28 January 2001.
- <sup>68</sup> Olivier Bureau, 'Civilian Recruiting Office', *SFOR Informer*, 28 April 1999.
- <sup>69</sup> Robert L. Barry, 'Lessons Learned from Bosnia', *Helsinki Monitor*, 3 (1999), 100–102: 102.
- <sup>70</sup> Confidential interview, 31 March 2009.
- <sup>71</sup> Confidential interview, 25 February 2009.
- <sup>72</sup> Liora Sion, 'Dutch Peacekeepers and Host Environments in the Balkans: an Ethnographic Perspective', *International Peacekeeping*, 15: 2(2008), 201–13: 210.
- <sup>73</sup> Lawrence Venuti, *The translator's invisibility: a history of translation* (London/New York: Routledge, 1995), 17.