

EDITORIAL

The death of Freddie Hurdis-Jones has robbed the interpreting profession of one of its most memorable practitioners. His career spanned the whole range of opportunities available to an interpreter of his vintage. He spent the fifties in Paris, the sixties with FAO in Rome, the seventies with the European Communities in Brussels and upon retirement in the early eighties settled in Venice to live and was responsible for the course in consecutive interpreting from Italian into English at the SSLMIT until he decided that the warmer climes of Malta were more congenial to his health. No one who ever shared his table (and the editors did and often) could fail to be charmed by his exquisite manner, mischievous ways and fine taste or knocked out by the breadth and depth of his culture. He preferred the word culture to learning as he always claimed not to be a specialist and was, indeed, one of the last of the "self-taught" generation of great interpreters beginning their careers in the aftermath of World War II. Renée Van Hoof described him at the Trieste Symposium in 1986 as the finest interpreter she had ever heard from French into English (no mean feat considering the vast experience of the speaker and the very formidable competition). We shall all miss him a great deal. He did leave his memoirs in manuscript form which may yet, after expurgation by the gentle censorship of affectionate friends, see the light of day and it is comforting to think that he will almost certainly have been elected Chairman of the Hereinafter Catering Committee and already be busy re-organising the cellar.

It is the course of his career which provides food for thought at a time when interpreter training has become predominantly a University concern. He had no specialist training himself, he, rather, "evolved" as an interpreter and was once heard to say that, provided you know the languages, you can learn interpreting (simultaneous *and* consecutive) in an afternoon. He implicitly meant, of course, provided you know the languages *and* a vast quantity of whatever has been written in them. The question must arise at this point when we are all, with Daniel Gile, reflecting upon possible future trends in interpreting research, whether there is any room in the future interpreting world for the "gentleman interpreter" of vast erudition and broad humanist interests for whom the practice of interpreting (let alone speculation upon or experimentation into interpreting!) has not been preceded by the reading of any of our books. Might Michael Francis actually be right (a hypothesis never seriously considered previously) and might the teaching of Latin and Greek not be more useful in teaching the trainee interpreter to think, reflect, analyse and deduce than lessons in consecutive? Might a fathomless knowledge of everything that has happened in the Western World since (at least) 1492 not lead to more polished and accurate performances than the most ingenious training programmes we can concoct? Do we not run the serious risk of overestimating the significance of our role as trainers? Would not benevolent neglect and the key to the library (the whole library and not just

the linguistics section) be more fruitful and stimulating? Possibly, but if Malraux is right and it does take sixty years to make an accomplished human being, then it must take at least forty to make an interpreter of Freddie's stature and forty years are what no trainee interpreter can afford to devote to the perfecting of his craft. What, too, about the central role of language learning, "provided you know the languages *beforehand*"? Freddie worked from French and Italian into English and from English into French. His spoken French was excellent, comforted by twenty years' residence in Francophone countries and a life-time's companionship with a French friend. Though he probably arrived in Italy too late in life ever to master flawless spoken Italian, his comprehension was complete. A perfect example of the interpreter, therefore, with one A, one B (into which he not only would but could work) and one C.

But times were different then. When he began his career he worked only with English and French and the years in Rome enabled him to accomplish his understanding of Italian to comply with the EEC minimum requirements of two foreign languages and enter the services of the Commission. He confessed that though he had no difficulty in reading Spanish he would never dream of working from Spanish and admitted unashamedly that the Germanic languages (apart from his native tongue) were forever beyond his grasp because his sympathies lay with the Mediterranean world and the idea of anywhere North of the Alps *and* East of the Rhine caused him to shudder. He was lucky enough to succeed in making the instruments of his profession coincide perfectly with his personal inclinations. Will any young interpreter ever be able to afford that luxury again? "Since I know the languages I may try to become an interpreter" has now been replaced by "I must learn the languages in order to become an interpreter". This is where interpreter trainers become relevant once more in that the language training they must of necessity impart to their students must always have that specific object in mind - "in order to become an interpreter". Freddie was able to bestride that narrow world, also because it was a narrow world. The world he has left behind him is, however, both wider and professionally, more exacting. May it never become too cold-blooded to treasure the memory of a man who did not take it quite so seriously as it either demanded or deserved.

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