

The Origins of Simultaneous Interpreting. The Nuremberg Trial By Francesca Galba (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1998), 191 pp. \$25.00 paperback.

The trial in Nuremberg of Nazi war leaders in 1945-46 was the first official international meeting in which simultaneous interpreting was used. The trial thus marks the debut of a profession and a technology now ubiquitous at major international gatherings. Francesca Galba's account of the interpreting at Nuremberg is thus very much in the mode of a profession paying tribute to its pioneers. The technology was successful; the interpreters and their organizers surmounted innumerable initial difficulties; the end result was a significant contribution to international justice. That much is clear, and superficial.

There are many ambiguities at work. For instance, if this was the origin of simultaneous interpreting, why is it that all legal settings since Nuremberg have been either monolingual or based on *consecutive* interpreting? Trials have thus become either faster (when kangaroo justice is so sure it can operate at speed) or slower (when importance is attached to the voice of the other and the fact of mediation). If justice was achieved at Nuremberg, it was at best of an intermediary kind.

Galba's research is not based on the original audio recordings of the interpreters, which have apparently not stood the test of time. Any oral mistakes by the interpreters are thus rendered invisible. What we are left with is a well documented account of the external features of the interpreting service. Reading between those lines, we find that the wheels of justice did not always run as smoothly as did the IBM headphones.

Was there justice when the original documentary evidence in German was not made available to the interpreters? Or when German defendants had to work from documents translated from German into English and then back to German (sic)? Or when defending counsel, unaware of the problems of interpreting, often used such long complex sentences that many of the arguments were lost in the English translation? Or when the interpreters, unhappy with their oral renditions, would go upstairs and change the official transcript (as if the trial were for posterity and not for immediate justice)? Or when some defendants knew more about German legal language than did the interpreters, and would thus openly challenge renditions? The victors at Nuremberg had to learn, on the job, how to prepare evidence in a multilingual courtroom, how to speak for interpreters, how to make the slowness of the exchanges an advantage, and indeed

how to blame the interpreting system for all kinds of shortcomings, whenever possible. The general impression, however, is that only the Germans really cared about the interpreting service. Many of the most revealing insights come from the memoirs of Hans Fritzsche; Göring delighted in picking up divergent legalities in German and English, despite the certainty of his own condemnation to the gallows. Their position was in keeping with what Adorno described as the barbarism of Nazi cultural refinement.

Galba's book has become a standard reference for research on conference interpreting. Graduate students tend to borrow it and not give it back (which might explain why this review comes so late). Her account seeks at every stage to justify the use of interpreting at Nuremberg: "there was no viable alternative to simultaneous interpreting". However, if read carefully, this book also reveals why international justice has indeed found alternatives to simultaneous interpreting.

Anthony Pym

Universitat Rovira i Virgili

URV. Plaça Imperial Tàrraco, 1

43005 Tarragona

Spain