



The Birth of a Profession

This book maps the adventure of turning a trade into a genuine profession: The first sixty years of the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC).

AIIC History Group.

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There have always been interpreters; interpreting has even been called the world's second oldest profession. But conference interpreting is relatively new. It is generally thought to have developed towards the end of World War I. French had served for centuries as the international language of diplomacy (it took over from Latin), but at the negotiations for the Treaty of Versailles the British, and in particular the American statesmen, could not speak French and so they called for two official languages - French and English. Interpreters were not simple language intermediaries between two people, but fully-fledged participants who took the floor to repeat in the second language what had been said in the other. When done within a conference structure, this activity was called conference interpretation.

In the early days it was done in consecutive mode, most particularly at the League of Nations. But at the Nuremberg Trial it was done in simultaneous; with more than two official languages consecutive was hard to manage. For the same reasons the United Nations and other organizations followed suit. Simultaneous interpreting required a great number of practitioners, and this brought a growing need to organize the profession. After local initiatives, particularly in Geneva and London, a small group led by Constantin Andronikof created the International Association of Conference Interpreters on 11 November 1953 in Paris. This was a bold undertaking that some thought was bound to fail, but it was a success. Andronikof's idea was very original: it was to be a worldwide Association (with 33 founding members this was something of a challenge) that would establish ethical standards and working conditions for the profession, and bring together freelancers and staff interpreters. Interpreters would be individual members of the central organization, unlike most international associations which were federations of national bodies.

This book recounts the fascinating adventure of turning a trade into a genuine profession.

Hence its title: THE BIRTH OF A PROFESSION

The History Group will launch the book officially during AIIC's 60th anniversary celebrations organized by the French region on [14 December 2013 at UNESCO in Paris](#), where AIIC was founded on 11 November 1953.

The book is on sale in French since 4 November 2013 and can be obtained from the AIIC secretariat (an English version will be planned for 2015).

You may place an order now by sending a message to publications@rg3whjp.aiic.net?subject=Book%20Order%20%22The%20Birth%20of%20a%20Profession%22

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