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CANADA IN THE WORLD :

The growing importance of foreign languages translation

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During the past two decades, tremendous advances in the means of communication and transportation have made our world smaller than ever. International scientific and cultural exchanges, an enormously expanded trans-oceanic traffic of all kinds, and a highly diversified and specialized international trade and political network link almost all countries together in a world community. The language barrier, however, remains a major problem.

In international relations, the translator has become a key figure, an intermediary without whom the effects of the technical advances of world communication would be largely nullified. Never before in history has international communication had the importance which it has today ; but the role of the translator is as yet barely recognized in many quarters.

The translator has become the essential channel of communication it is his responsibility to transmit increasingly varied and complex information. Transmitting information must be the guiding spirit of translation.

The translator must be guided in his work by an understanding of the purpose and intent of the originator's message, as well as by an appreciation of the needs and interests of the recipient of the information. By adapting his style of writing to the individual requirements of transmitting information the translator becomes a real intermediary in inter-cultural communication, playing a truly creative role in the world community.

The recognition of this fact is reflected in the continuing growth, in most countries, of the number of people employed as translators, and the development of translation as a profession. While Canada is by no means as far advanced in this regard as many other countries, particularly in the field of foreign languages (as opposed to English - French) translation, the requirements of Canadian society have brought about changes which give hope of rapid progress in the near future. The need for translations is bound to increase greatly as more Canadian trade missions travel the world ; Canadian diplomats gather more specialized reports ; more Canadian scientists participate in international congresses ; Canadian films

compete in more international film festivals and Canadian industry imports and exports a greater variety of products. The Canadian Government is the greatest user of foreign language translations in Canada. Its requirements will continue to grow.

Science today has become truly international, and scientific translation is of extreme importance. Scientists working in Canada frequently base their current work on findings made by Japanese, Russian or German scientists, but not knowing the languages of their counterparts abroad, they are dependent on accurate translations of these scientific reports.

The growing complexity of scientific information, however, often makes the work of translation extremely difficult. It demands, besides language abilities, the skills of a technical or scientific writer who can communicate, without a deep background knowledge, correct meanings of highly specialized and complicated reports.

Another type of specialized communication of increasing importance is the trade publicity material published in foreign languages for distribution abroad. It accompanies Canadian Trade Missions, and is handed out to foreign buyers at international trade fairs. This material advertises Canada and Canadian products and, therefore, must have impact and stylistic appeal, in a cultural environment which differs from that of Canada. The translator is required to re-write the material with this end in mind, which demands, besides language abilities, the skills of an advertising writer, and an understanding of the contemporary cultural milieu of the country of destination.

The complexity of specialized communications, besides the increasing volume of work, places a heavy responsibility on the translator of foreign languages. On him depends the effectiveness of the world-wide exchange of knowledge and information. If the warp of the network tying the nations of the world together be formed by the means of modern communication, its woof are the foreign language translators, without whom the concept of a world community becomes ephemeral.

