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Citation for the original published paper (version of record):

Nilsson, M. (2016)

Hugh Trevor-Roper and the English Editions of *Hitler's Table Talk* and *Testament*.

Journal of contemporary history

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0022009415619689>

Access to the published version may require subscription.

N.B. When citing this work, cite the original published paper.

Permanent link to this version:

<http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:uu:diva-260927>

Hugh Trevor-Roper and the Publications of *Hitler's Table Talk* and *Testament*

Introduction

In this article I will show how Oxford's former Regius Professor of Modern History, Hugh Trevor-Roper, consistently through his career kept critical information regarding famous Hitler documents that he authenticated, information that could have seriously damaged the credibility of the sources he validated, from his readers.¹ The documents in question are two well-known sources of Hitler's utterances during the Second World War, namely *Hitler's Table Talk* (henceforth: *Table Talk*), published for the first time in 1953 (second edition in 1973), and *The Testament of Adolf Hitler* (henceforth: *The Testament*) in 1961.² Many, if not most, historians have used the *Table Talk* when writing about Hitler and the Second World War, and it has been accepted as genuine even though the translation into English is known to be flawed. Nevertheless, the authenticity of the original manuscripts (both currently missing, but there are two German versions in print based on them) has never been established conclusively, and many doubts still remain both about their claims to reliability and about how well they convey Hitler's words.

The motive for investigating the events surrounding the publication of the first English edition of *Table Talk* published in 1953, and the second edition published in 1973, is two-fold: 1) the English translation made the *Table Talk* known to a broad international audience, and 2) by writing the introduction to this version Trevor-Roper effectively validated this source in the eyes of historians. The latter fact is most likely the explanation for why no thorough examination of this source has ever been made. In his introduction to *Table Talk* in 1953 Trevor-Roper stated that it had been translated from the original German manuscript.³ As we shall see in this article this was not true. While part of it probably was, this article can now prove that a large part was in fact translated from a French edition published the year before. Hence there are several reasons why a critical examination of this important historical document needs to be done.

The Testament, on the other hand, is more controversial and, while historians previously accepted it as genuine, newer scholarship has seriously questioned its authenticity.⁴ This text was purportedly a continuation of the first set of notes, supposedly taken down in Hitler's bunker in Berlin during the last months of the war. Both the *Table Talk* and *The Testament*

¹ This article would not have been possible to write without the kind assistance of historian Blair Worden (Oxford University), archivist Judith Curthoys (Lord Dacre Archive, Christ Church College, Oxford), and journalist Gina Thomas. All citations from the Trevor-Roper archival material are made with the kind permission of the Literary Estate of Lord Dacre of Glanton. I also want to thank Dr. Marco Wyss (University of Chichester) for having the patience of checking my translations and reading several draft, not to mention suffering through my endless ramblings on this subject. I am extra grateful to Professor Margaret Hunt (Uppsala University) for her careful reading and corrections of grammar and spelling errors.

² *Hitler's Table Talk 1941–1944. With an Introductory Essay on The Mind of Adolf Hitler by H. R. Trevor-Roper* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1953). This text has gone through several editions and translations over the years: *Hitler's Table Talk 1941–1944. His Private Conversations. Translated by Norman Cameron and R. H. Stevens. Introduced and with a new preface by H. R. Trevor-Roper* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1973); *Hitler's Table-Talk 1941–1944: With an introductory essay on the mind of Adolf Hitler by H. R. Trevor-Roper* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988). *The Testament of Adolf Hitler: The Hitler–Bormann Documents, February–April 1945. Edited by François Genoud; with an Introduction by Hugh R. Trevor-Roper; Translated from the German by R. H. Stevens* (London: Cassell, 1961). Note that I have purposefully refrained from listing Adolf Hitler as the author of these titles, as is commonly done, simply because it is not clear who the real author of the words printed in these books are. We simply do not know how much of it is Hitler's words as they were spoken, and how much is a product of the later recollection and editing process.

³ Note that this article should not be viewed as an invalidation or critique of Trevor-Roper's introductory essay, which remains an important piece of scholarship, although hampered by a lack of critical distance to the *Table Talk* text.

⁴ See e.g. Kershaw, Ian, *Hitler 1936–45: Nemesis* (London: Allen Lane, 2000), pp. 1024–1025.

derived from manuscripts in the hands of a Swiss Nazi sympathiser, banker, and financier of international terrorism called François Genoud.⁵ Trevor-Roper was involved in the publication of both the English version of 1961 and the German edition of 1981,⁶ contributing an introduction to both editions. Even though *The Testament* is no longer considered to be authentic by leading scholars (or at least there is a general sentiment that it should not be used due to doubts about its authenticity) the process leading up to its publication is relevant to this discussion because of the many parallels with the publication of *Table Talk*. This article aims to answer the following two questions: What did the process leading up to the publication of the *Table Talk* and *The Testament* look like, and what was Trevor-Roper's role in this process?

Table Talk was a series of rambling monologues that Hitler supposedly delivered during meals and over nightly tea, so-called *Teestunden*, in various military headquarters during the Second World War. They were written down chiefly by two of *Reichsleiter* Martin Bormann's assistants, Heinrich Heim and Henry Picker, between the summer of 1941 and the winter of 1944. In addition to Heim and Picker, there are two more known authors, namely Bormann himself, who contributed at least four entries, and a man known only as Müller. As mentioned earlier, several versions of these monologues exist in print. Henry Picker was the first to publish a book called *Tischgespräche im Führerhauptquartier 1941–1942* (henceforth *Tischgespräche*) based on his own notes and some of Heim's notes to which he had gained access. This book was thematically arranged by its editor, the German historian Gerhard Ritter, and published in cooperation with the Institut für Zeitgeschichte (IfZ) in Munich in 1951.⁷ A second edition with the same title was published in 1963, this time chronologically arranged and edited by German historian Percy Ernst Schramm.⁸

One year after Picker had published his first edition Genoud published a French version of the table monologues (the first volume of two, the second volume was published in 1954). This French version, entitled *Libres propos sur la guerre et la paix* (henceforth *Libres propos*) was not based on the same German original as Picker's edition, but on a second manuscript that had purportedly been acquired by Genoud, the so-called *Bormann-Vermerke*. The form, content and provenance of the *Bormann-Vermerke* remain obscure, but it apparently consisted not only of all of Heim's notes but also some of Picker's. The first volume of *Libres propos*, however, omitted Picker's notes. It broke off in March 1942 just before Picker took over from Heim when the latter was sent away for a few months.⁹ Genoud was also the driving force behind the translation of his French version into English the following year, which was, however, expanded to cover the whole period from 1941 to the end of 1944 and to include all of Heim's and Picker's notes said to have been in Genoud's possession.¹⁰ The German text, which the French and English editions are said to be based upon, was, for reasons that are unclear, not published until 1980. It was given the title *Monologe im Führerhauptquartier* (henceforth *Monologe*) and was published under the

⁵ For more on Genoud, see: Péan, Pierre, *L'extrémiste: François Genoud de Hitler à Carlos* (Paris: Fayard, 1996); Laske, Karl, *Ein Leben zwischen Hitler und Carlos: François Genoud* (Zürich: Limmat, 1996); Winkler, Willi, *Der Schattenmann. Von Goebbels zu Carlos: Das gewissenlose Leben des François Genoud* (Berlin: Rowohlt, 2011).

⁶ *Hitlers politisches Testament. Die Bormann Diktate vom Februar und April 1945. Mit einem Essay von Hugh R. Trevor-Roper und einem Nachwort von André François-Poncet* (Hamburg: Albrecht Knaus Verlag, 1981).

⁷ Picker, Henry, *Hitlers Tischgespräche im Führerhauptquartier 1941–1942. Im Auftrage des Deutschen Instituts für Zeitgeschichte der nationalsozialistischen Zeit geordnet, eingeleitet und veröffentlicht von Gerhard Ritter, Professor der Geschichte a. d. Universität Freiburg* (Bonn: Athenäum-Verlag, 1951).

⁸ Picker, Henry, *Hitlers Tischgespräche im Führerhauptquartier 1941–1942* (Stuttgart: Seewald Verlag, 1963).

⁹ *Libres propos sur la guerre et la Paix. Recueillis sur l'ordre de Martin Bormann. Préface de Robert d'Harcourt de l'Académie française. Version française de François Genoud* (Paris: Flammarion, 1952).

¹⁰ See: *Hitler's Table Talk* (1953).

auspices of German historian Werner Jochmann. This edition does not contain Picker's notes either due to a struggle over intellectual property rights.¹¹ It does not help that both Heim's and Picker's original manuscripts seem to have been lost. The closest we get to the original Heim notes are approximately 40 pages, dated January 1942, that were initially stored at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. (since then returned to the Bundesarchiv in Koblenz, Germany).¹² However, nobody knows if these are authentic or not, even if the evidence so far indicates that they are.

Historian Richard C. Carrier is the only scholar to date to have critically compared these texts and published the results. He has shown that the translations into English and French are highly questionable, at least if one starts from the assumption that they were translations from a text identical to *Monologe*. He has also demonstrated that the English translation was at least partly based on Genoud's French edition (he only had access to the first volume of *Libres propos*) and that both the English and French editions contain additions to, and mistranslations of, the German texts that they are supposedly based on.¹³ This article will also, inevitably, address certain questions related to the authenticity of the *Bormann-Vermerke*, as well as the accuracy of the translations, since these issues are intrinsically tied to (and are certainly raised by) the main topic of the article. However, this subject deserves an article of its own in order to do it full justice.

Trevor-Roper and the First Edition of *Table Talk*

Trevor-Roper first learned about the existence of Picker's *Tischgespräche* in 1951, and he read it with great interest.¹⁴ But instead of contacting Picker, historian Gerhard Ritter, or the IfZ, he started a cordial correspondence with Genoud as early as the winter of 1951–52.¹⁵ Apparently, Trevor-Roper was the one who contacted Genoud regarding the possibility of publishing an English edition.¹⁶ It is still unknown why Trevor-Roper did not make contact with Picker instead of Genoud at this early point. Their first meeting took place in Lausanne in Switzerland on 23 August 1952, after Genoud had published *Libres propos* and serialised it in the French magazine *France Soir*.¹⁷ By the summer of 1952 Trevor-Roper knew that Genoud (whom he called an ex-Nazi) claimed to possess 'the entire original text' of the table monologues. By this time, Picker had sued Genoud, his publisher Flammarion, and *France Soir* for breach of copyright, and Trevor-Roper, who knew about the suit, expected it to be very interesting. Initially, however, Trevor-Roper seems to have been a bit sceptical about Genoud's claims, stating in a letter that 'I suspect – though it is mere surmise – that Genoud's title is really bad & that he is trying to off-load the documents before the trial exposes him!'¹⁸

But Trevor-Roper seems to have dropped these suspicions rather quickly, despite the fact that at their meeting in Lausanne Genoud was very reticent about how he had acquired the manuscript. Genoud was certain he would win the copyright case and claimed that Picker had

¹¹ *Monologe im Führerhauptquartier 1941–1944. Die Aufzeichnungen Heinrich Heims herausgegeben von Werner Jochmann* (Hamburg: Albrecht Knaus Verlag, 1980).

¹² Bundesarchiv; Partei-Kanzlei der NSDAP; NS6/819 'Hitlers Tischgespräche im Führerhauptquartier'.

¹³ Carrier, Richard, 'Hitler's Table Talk: Troubling Finds' in *German Studies Review*, Vol. 26, No. 3 (Oct. 2003).

¹⁴ Davenport-Hines, Richard (ed.), *Letters from Oxford: Hugh Trevor-Roper to Bernard Berenson* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2006), p. 74.

¹⁵ Péan, P., *L'extrémiste: ...*, p. 188.

¹⁶ Sisman, Adam, *Hugh Trevor-Roper: The Biography* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson), p. 214.), pp. 213–214.

¹⁷ Genoud to HTR, 15 August, 1952; see also notes by Trevor-Roper from the meeting 'Fra. Genoud vs. Heinrich Picker'; Christ Church Library, Oxford; Hugh Trevor-Roper Papers; Vol. Soc. Dacre (henceforth: CCLO; HTRP;VSD) 6/6/1. It is obvious from the notes that Trevor-Roper did not get to see the manuscript at this meeting.

¹⁸ Davenport-Hines, R. (ed.), *Letters from Oxford...*, pp. 93–94.

falsified the notes. Trevor-Roper wrote that Genoud ‘showed me numerous incidents in which Picker had altered the sense of the documents compiled by Heim.’¹⁹ These were only typed comparisons between entries in German written by Genoud,²⁰ and since Trevor-Roper was not shown the original manuscript it could not be considered solid evidence that such an original really existed. Genoud was already negotiating with several publishers for an English edition but had made no commitment to any of their offers.²¹ In order for Genoud to sell his documents as genuine transcripts of Hitler’s table monologues, he needed, or felt he needed, to get a renowned scholar to authenticate his manuscript for him. In September of 1952 Genoud wrote to Trevor-Roper saying that he would consider Trevor-Roper’s validation of his documents as a tremendous help in the French court case. Genoud wrote:

Seul devrait compter à mon avis la valeur historique des documents en cause. Sur ce plan-là, il me paraîtrait capital que votre témoignage pût être produit. Vous êtes en effet le spécialiste unanimement reconnu comme le plus qualifié en cette matière, et je suis sûr qu’un avis objectif de votre part aurait un poids immense.²²

Genoud then wished to know if he could refer to Trevor-Roper if necessary both in the French and German lawsuits. By this time Trevor-Roper had already started to look into the possibility of publication in English, and Genoud thanked Trevor-Roper warmly for this effort.²³ In response to Genoud’s plea, Trevor-Roper agreed to testify on behalf of Genoud if needed.²⁴ After having met Genoud Trevor-Roper returned to England and published an article about Genoud’s manuscript in a major British newspaper, with the explicit purpose of arousing interest about this source among British publishers.²⁵ The article, essentially a report on the on-going lawsuits in Germany and France, was published on 12 October 1952 in the *Sunday Express*.²⁶

Trevor-Roper’s efforts really paid off. The publisher George Weidenfeld wrote to Genoud just five days after the *Sunday Express* article appeared and offered him a deal for an English translation. Several days after that Genoud wrote to thank Trevor-Roper for his important role in arranging this deal, saying that the article in *The Sunday Express* had validated his manuscript in the eyes of the English-speaking audience; ‘Grâce à vous, ces documents sont mis en valeur devant le public anglais.’²⁷ Neither Weidenfeld nor Trevor-Roper had yet seen the product they were buying and authenticating. Genoud quickly accepted Weidenfeld’s offer and agreed to meet him and Trevor-Roper in Paris at their convenience to hammer out the details.²⁸ It is still highly uncertain if, or at what point, Trevor-Roper got to see the *Bormann-Vermerke* and, if he did, how much of it he in that case

¹⁹ Notes by Trevor-Roper from the meeting ‘Fra. Genoud vs. Heinrich Picker’; CCLO; HTRP; VSD 6/6/1, pp. 1–5.

²⁰ See typed pages by Genoud: CCLO; HTRP; VSD 6/6/1, p. 6.

²¹ Genoud to Trevor-Roper, 29 August, 1952; CCLO; HTRP; VSD 6/6/1.

²² Genoud to Trevor-Roper, 19 September 1952; CCLO; HTRP; VSD 6/6/1. [Translation: The only thing that should count is, in my opinion, the historical value of these documents that we are talking about. Accordingly, it seems to me to be essential that your testimony can be put forth. You are unanimously recognized as the most qualified specialist in this matter, and I am sure that your objective opinion would have immense weight.]

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Genoud to Trevor-Roper, 3 October 1952; CCLO; HTRP; VSD 6/6/1.

²⁵ Péan, Pierre, *L’extrémiste...*, p. 188.

²⁶ Trevor-Roper, Hugh R., ‘Hitler’s Sister Sensation. Secret book sets off claim to Nazi estate’ in *Sunday Express*, October 12, 1952.

²⁷ Genoud to Trevor-Roper, 21 October, 1952; CCLO; HTRP; VSD 6/6/1. Thanks to you, these documents have been given value in the eyes of the English public.

²⁸ Genoud to Weidenfeld, 21 October, 1952; CCLO; HTRP; VSD 6/6/1. See also: Weidenfeld, George, *Remembering Good Friends: An Autobiography* (London: HarperCollins, 1995), p. 290. Unfortunately Weidenfeld writes very little about the publication of *Table Talk*.

was allowed to look at. He certainly had no opportunity to undertake a proper investigation of the manuscript or to compare it with the various versions already in print.

On top of that, Trevor-Roper knew full well that the translation was not made exclusively from a German ‘original’. Weidenfeld wrote to him on 8 January 1953 stating that he had ‘had to use a second translator, Colonel Stevens [...], whom I sent to Montreux, where he has been translating from the German direct under Genoud’s supervision. The whole of next week will be used to iron out stylistic differences between the two translations [that is, the translation from the printed French and the translation from the German text, M. N.], so that by the end of that week you would have the complete raw material.’²⁹ This proves that Stevens did in fact translate a German text. The first translator, who translated from the French, must have been Norman Cameron who is listed as one of the two translators in the English edition. Stevens was used for the part that was translated from a German version. Moreover, it is not clear what German text it was that Stevens translated, i.e. whether it was the original or a typed copy. Considering how unwilling Genoud was to show the manuscript to professional historians it is hard to see why he would reveal it to a translator. Nor do we know what is meant by the statement that Genoud ‘supervised’ the translation. Anyway, Trevor-Roper received the last part of Stevens’ translation on 28 January, 1953.³⁰

The fact that Genoud’s French edition was to be the basis for the translation was no secret to Trevor-Roper at any stage of the translation process. It was clearly laid out in the contract concluded between Genoud and Weidenfeld in late 1952. Already in October 1952 Trevor-Roper received two copies of the contract, which included everything they had agreed upon.³¹ The key paragraph stated:

III. The translation into English will be made on the basis of the French version by François Genoud and it is agreed that the licensor will permit the translator appointed by the licensee to examine at any time in Switzerland the original German version insofar as this is required by the work of translation.³²

Trevor-Roper also acknowledged that he had received the contracts and stated that he would get back to Weidenfeld regarding his views on the text.³³ Unfortunately, however, these comments are nowhere to be found in his papers so it is not known what he thought about this part of the agreement, or if he ever questioned the motive behind it.

But we do know that he did not mention any of this to his readers. Trevor-Roper did not utter a single syllable about any of these facts in his preface to *Table Talk* dated 16 March 1953. Instead he unequivocally stated that: ‘The text used for this edition of Hitler’s *Table-Talk* is the text of the original *Bormann-Vermerke* [...]’.³⁴ How do we explain Trevor-Roper’s decision to leave out vital background information? Perhaps part of the explanation can be found in a letter from Weidenfeld to Trevor-Roper in February 1953 that stated the following:

²⁹ Weidenfeld to Trevor-Roper, 8 January, 1953; CCLO; HTRP; VSD 6/6/1. Apparently though, Stevens was not as good a translator as they thought. Weidenfeld used him also for the translation of the Bormann letters only a little over half a year later but then felt obliged to correct his translations by using another translator. ‘Mr. Weidenfeld considers the translation now to be reliable as Col. Stevens’ version has been entirely revised by, I believe, Ilsa Barea’, said a letter then from the publisher to Trevor-Roper. However, Trevor-Roper still thought there were mistranslations, something that worried the publisher quite a bit (Nicolas Thompson to Trevor-Roper, 9 October, 1953; CCLO; HTRP; VSD 3/8/1, p. 1).

³⁰ Richards to Trevor-Roper, 28 January, 1953; CCLO; HTRP; VSD 6/6/1.

³¹ Weidenfeld to Trevor-Roper, 22 October, 1952; CCLO; HTRP; VSD 6/6/1. These two copies of the contract are apparently no longer extant.

³² Copy of contract from 1953 attached to letter from Wiedenfeld & Nicolson to Trevor-Roper, 23 March, 1973; CCLO; HTRP; VSD 6/6/1, p. 1.

³³ Trevor-Roper to Weidenfeld, 23 October, 1952; CCLO; HTRP; VSD 6/6/1, p. 2.

³⁴ See: ‘A Note on the Text’ in: Hitler, A., *Hitler’s Table Talk...* (1953).

We are now engaged in re-checking the first half of the translation, which as you know had to be made from the French, but was subsequently revised by the second translator, who worked from the original German.³⁵

We know that Weidenfeld's version is inaccurate because Carrier has proven (as does any other comparison of the English, French, and *Monologe*) that the English text was not 'subsequently revised'. If it had been we would not be able to see that it was translated from the French. Did Trevor-Roper think that the text had been completely re-checked against the German original? Be that as it may, considering what article III in the contract said Trevor-Roper still ought to have mentioned this when talking about the text and what it was based on. After all, he was validating a major historical document by putting his name on it and ought to have been more careful in checking its authenticity and the translation's correspondence to the original.

But there is a problem here that we need to resolve before moving on. Why would Weidenfeld tell Trevor-Roper that the translation had been checked if it really had not been? The obvious answer is of course that he would not. But how can Weidenfeld be telling the truth when the comparisons show that *Table Talk* correspond to the French and *not* to the German version? The answer to this conundrum appears to be that the translation was not checked against Genoud's original manuscript but against *a different* German text, one that Genoud most likely had re-translated into German from his French version. In fact, Weidenfeld never said that the text had been checked against the *Bormann-Vermerke*, but only that it had been checked against 'the original German'. That could indeed refer to any text written in German. That is the only conceivable way that the text could have been translated from, and checked against, a German 'original' even though it agrees completely with Genoud's French edition. This also shows just how hoodwinked Weidenfeld and Trevor-Roper had been by Genoud.

One comparison of these three texts will have to suffice as evidence because of space constraints. The first quote is from *Table Talk* and I have marked the various parts so as to make the commonalities and differences clear (italics: from the French; bold: from the German; underlined: in both the French and German; standard: only in the English):

*It is perfectly true that the British swallow everything they are told. At the moment, nevertheless, there is a certain amount of murmuring over faked reports. To justify their bluff, those at the head of affairs are reduced to telling the discontented that these false reports are being spread in order to deceive the enemy. **A large portion of intelligent Britons say: "We are waging this war by bluff, and it's the only way we can wage it!"** Whether they believe that they are really bluffing us, is a very different matter.³⁶*

Libres propos gives us the following version:

Il est vrai que le public anglais avale toutes les bourdes. En ce moment pourtant, il est visible que l'opinion britannique commence à se montrer réticente. Pour justifier leur bluff, les dirigeants en sont réduits à expliquer à ceux qui protestent qu'il font cela pour tromper l'adversaire. Il n'y a pas d'autre façon, disent-ils, de conduire la guerre. Eh bien, nous pouvons les assurer qu'ils font erreur s'ils pensent nous intimider en agissant de la sorte!³⁷

In *Monologe*, finally, we find this:

³⁵ Weidenfeld to Trevor-Roper, 25 March, 1953; CCLO; HTRP; VSD 6/6/1.

³⁶ *Hitler's Table Talk...* (1953), p. 604.

³⁷ *Libres propos sur la Guerre et la Paix...*, p. 236.

Gewiß, die Masse nimmt dort gläubig hin, was ihr gesagt wird; aber man hört jetzt doch auch viele Stimmen des Unmuts über Falschberichtung. Die Führung entschuldigt sich damit, in Rücksicht auf uns müsse man so schreiben. Ein großer Teil der intellektuellen Engländer sagt: Wir führen Krieg mit Bluff! Sie bilden sich ein, daß sie uns damit einschüchtern können.³⁸

We see that the word “bluff”, the first time it appears, must stem from the French edition since there context of it is also so obviously stems from *Libres propos*, but that the second time it appears it has to come from the German since the French does not repeat it. What is interesting here, besides the confusing mixture of passages, is that the last sentence in the example from *Table Talk*, while clearly related in some way to the one in *Monologe*, has taken on a completely different meaning. This, too, would be explained if we assume that the German text Stevens had access to contained a sentence like this, because it is very hard to imagine why Stevens would simply change it or misread it. The last sentence in the French is also clearly related to the German, but is phrased quite differently. Also worth noting is that the Italian edition follows the French perfectly, which proves that it is a pure translation of the two volumes of *Libres propos*.³⁹ As we shall see below, Genoud translated the text of *Hitlers politisches Testament* back into German from a previous French translation too, so it seems that we have detected a pattern here. That together with the fact that Genoud made changes to the text when translating it into French makes the explanation for the findings presented here all the more likely to be true.

Hugh Trevor-Roper and the Second Edition of *Table Talk*

Table Talk quickly became a bestseller and it confirmed Trevor-Roper as one of the foremost experts on Hitler in the world at the time, a place he had held since 1947 when his hugely influential book *The Last Days of Hitler* appeared. His essay on ‘The Mind of Adolf Hitler’ in this book – which Ron Rosenbaum has called ‘his most illuminating essay on Hitler’ – became one of the most influential interpretations of Hitler and his actions.⁴⁰

Almost twenty years later, in the fall of 1972, Trevor-Roper was contacted by the Senior Editor at the publishing house Tom Stacey Ltd., Robin Wright, with a request to write an introduction to a planned English edition of Picker’s *Hitlers Tischgespräche im Bild* that had been published in Germany in 1969. This edition of the text was accompanied by 350 photographs by Hitler’s private photographer Heinrich Hoffmann.⁴¹ By 1972 *Table Talk* had been out of print for quite some time and Trevor-Roper decided to contact Weidenfeld in order to suggest that they should put out a second edition of the book, since, as he wrote, he would rather see a new version of this book than ‘see an historical document superseded (if that is the right word) by a pro-nazi picture book.’⁴² Weidenfeld was ‘delighted’ that Trevor-Roper had brought this issue up and thought that they could probably re-publish Trevor-Roper’s preface as it stood, unless Trevor-Roper wanted to add something to the text.⁴³ Weidenfeld quickly arranged a meeting with Genoud in London to discuss the new project and the Swiss was just as delighted as the others about the idea.⁴⁴

³⁸ *Monologe im Führerhauptquartier...*, p. 320.

³⁹ Hitler, Adolf, *Conversazioni segrete. Ordinate e annotate da Martin Bormann durante il periodo più drammatico della Seconda Guerra Mondiale (5 luglio 1941–30 novembre 1944)* (Napoli: Richter, 1954), p. 640–646. Ironically, the Italian historian Augusto Donaudy states in the preface to this book that *Libres propos* was a ‘l’egregia e fedelissima traduzione in lingua francese dei *Bormann-Vermerke* [sic]’, i.e. an excellent and faithful French translation of the original *Bormann-Vermerke* (ibid., p. VI).

⁴⁰ Rosenbaum, Ron, *Explaining Hitler: the Search for the Origins of Evil* (London: Papermac, 1999), pp. 63, 72.

⁴¹ Wright to Trevor-Roper, 12 September, 1972; CCLO; HTRP; VSD 6/6/2.

⁴² Trevor-Roper to Weidenfeld, 14 September, 1972; CCLO; HTRP; VSD 6/6/2.

⁴³ Weidenfeld to Trevor-Roper, 22 September, 1972; CCLO; HTRP; VSD 6/6/2.

⁴⁴ Genoud to Trevor-Roper, 7 October, 1972; CCLO; HTRP; VSD 6/6/2.

Nonetheless, it was eventually decided that Trevor-Roper would write a new preface for the second edition, and the publisher also deleted a so-called ‘note on the text’ that had been included in the 1953 edition. Trevor-Roper delivered the new preface just before Christmas 1972.⁴⁵ In the new preface he compared the second edition of *Tischgespräche* with *Table Talk* and catalogued which entries they had in common. He also noted some minor textual differences between the versions.⁴⁶ To finish the preface off Trevor-Roper wrote that:

One day – when the original German text of the Bormann Vermerke is available and other obstacles have been removed – it will be possible to present a complete record of Hitler’s surviving Table-Talk. Meanwhile, M. Genoud’s text remains by far the fullest continuous record, and the only record in English, of an important historical document.⁴⁷ [Underlined in original.]

He also provided some new information regarding Genoud’s manuscript in this preface, but said nothing of it being translated from the French. How can we explain this second omission of this important fact? The most straightforward answer is that he had forgotten about it. It seems to have been around this time that Trevor-Roper realized, or perhaps re-discovered is a better word, that Stevens had translated *Table Talk* from the French. This becomes obvious in a correspondence between Trevor-Roper and the German historian and sociologist Eduard Baumgarten. Trevor-Roper wrote that he had come to realize that Stevens had used the French text for his translation. He had stumbled on this fact, he said, when he, while working on the new edition of *Table Talk*. Specifically, he discovered a mistake in Stevens’ translation that only made sense if the latter had used Genoud’s French version. Trevor-Roper wrote to Baumgarten:

In other words, I now think that Genoud supplied to Stevens not the German original but his own French version of ‘T.T.1’ [*Table Talk* 1, M. N.] [...].⁴⁸

It was unfortunate that Stevens had since died, Trevor-Roper stated, as he would have liked to ask him about it.⁴⁹ In fact, as we have seen, it probably was not Stevens who translated from the French (more likely it was Norman Cameron), but that is another matter. But Trevor-Roper had actually been reminded of this odd translation process by Genoud in 1958 when the two were preparing the publication of *The Testament*, which came out in 1961 and that had also first been published in French (in 1959).⁵⁰ The translation into English was to be made from the French, and Genoud noted that the circumstances were similar to those that had accompanied the translation of *Table Talk* into English – ‘Nous somme dans la même situation que pour les Table Talk il y a six ans’.⁵¹ In fact, two weeks later Stevens himself reminded Trevor-Roper about exactly the same thing when he wrote that he would ‘have preferred to translate direct from the original German (as I did in my share of Hitler’s Table Talks).’⁵²

⁴⁵ Walford to Trevor-Roper, 20 December, 1972; CCLO; HTRP; VSD 6/6/2.

⁴⁶ Undated list of entries and notes of the comparisons; CCLO; HTRP; VSD 6/6/2.

⁴⁷ Hitler, A., *Hitler’s Table Talk...* (1973), p. x.

⁴⁸ Trevor-Roper to Baumgarten, 18 March, 1973; CCLO; HTRP; VSD 6/6/1, p. 2.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ *Le testament politique de Hitler. Notes recueillies par Martin Bormann. Commentaires de André François-Pencet; version française et présentation de François Genoud* (Paris, Fayard, 1959); *The Testament of Adolf Hitler...*

⁵¹ Genoud to Trevor-Roper, 16 May 1958; CCLO; HTRP; VSD 6/6/2. (Translation: We are in the same situation as with the *Table Talk* six years ago.)

⁵² Stevens to Trevor-Roper, 2 June 1958; CCLO; HTRP; VSD 6/6/2. Note that Stevens too does not refer to the original manuscript, but to the original German.

On the very same day Trevor-Roper wrote to Baumgarten (18 March 1973), he wrote to editor Hilary Walford at Weidenfeld & Nicholson asking her to undertake some research in the company's archive to find out if Stevens had in fact translated from the German original or, as he now suspected, from the French. He stated in his letters that this issue 'may be of greater interest than it seems.' This was obviously true, but the remarkable fact is that in the next breath Trevor-Roper wrote:

The answer to this question does not affect the authenticity of the *Table Talk*, or the reliability of Stevens' version, which is beyond question; but it might prove the key to a larger problem in which I am interested.⁵³

The problem that Trevor-Roper was referring to remains unknown. But his claim that he did not think that any of this affected the reliability of *Table Talk* is interesting, not least because we now know that it did definitely distort it in various places. It is very likely that Trevor-Roper was lying here, and that he did in fact realize that this affected the authenticity but that he simply decided to hide this from the publisher as they were just about to publish the second edition of *Table Talk*.⁵⁴ Walford replied some days later stating that all the documentation regarding this publication had been lost, including the original contract, but the company had received a copy from Genoud when they had negotiated the terms for the new edition of *Table Talk* and she included a copy of this (as well as an English translation) in which the third paragraph cited above stated that the translation was to be made from the French.⁵⁵ Trevor-Roper thanked Walford for the copy of the contract, which 'answers my question' regarding the translation process.⁵⁶

Nonetheless, we find Trevor-Roper stating confidently also in the 1973 preface that the text was 'a translation of the *Bormann-Vermerke* [...]'.⁵⁷ In fact he stated the same thing once more on the next page.⁵⁸ But of course we cannot possibly judge Trevor-Roper for not having included something if he had only gained knowledge of it *after* the second edition had been published, or at least was in the process of being published (it is uncertain exactly where in the production process the book was in March 1973). However, Trevor-Roper had in fact stated to Baumgarten that he had understood that the text was translated from the French *while working on the second edition* (i.e. several months before). Trevor-Roper even said that it was due to a mistake that he had discovered, which 'proved' to him that the text had been translated from the French. If Trevor-Roper was telling the truth to Baumgarten this must reasonably be referring to the autumn or early winter of 1972, i.e. before Trevor-Roper produced even the first draft of his preface.⁵⁹ The process of asking for the contract from Weidenfeld was simply a secondary stage of confirming this fact anew. Thus, even though

⁵³ Trevor-Roper to Hilary Walford, 18 March, 1973; CCLO; HTRP; VSD 6/6/1.

⁵⁴ I want to thank Professor Margaret Hunt for making this point clear to me.

⁵⁵ Walford to Trevor-Roper, 23 March, 1973; CCLO; HTRP; VSD 6/6/1, p. 1. See also copies of the contracts attached to the letter.

⁵⁶ Trevor-Roper to Hilary Walford, 30 March, 1973; CCLO; HTRP; VSD 6/6/1.

⁵⁷ Hitler, A., *Hitler's Table Talk...* (1973), p. vii. Trevor-Roper is the only one referring to the *Bormann-Vermerke*. Stevens and Weidenfeld never do so.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. viii.

⁵⁹ Trevor-Roper to Baumgarten, 18 March, 1973; CCLO; HTRP; VSD 6/6/1, p. 2. The evidence for this timeline is that correspondence between Trevor-Roper and Weidenfeld & Nicholson shows that he sent his preface to the publisher on 20 December 1972 (see: Walford to Trevor-Roper, 20 December, 1972; CCLO; HTRP; VSD 6/6/2). This means that Trevor-Roper could only be referring to a point in time prior to that. In his archive is also documents that show that he undertook a quite detailed comparison between Picker's *Tischgespräche* and *Table Talk*, which indicates that he was working for some time on this between September 1972, when he first suggested to Wiedenfeld that a second edition should be published, and late December (see list of comparisons in: CCLO; HTRP; VSD 6/6/2).

Trevor-Roper understood that something was not right about the *Table Talk* text, he did not mention anything about it to the readers.

Trevor-Roper and *The Testament of Adolf Hitler*

In the following section we will explore several more instances where Trevor-Roper made similar, if not exactly the same, omissions with regard to other Hitler documents obtained from Genoud, most notably *The Testament*. On 26 May, 1969, Trevor-Roper wrote the following to Stuttgart historian Eberhard Jäckel:

P.S. May I congratulate you on your diplomatic skill in obtaining the German text of the 1945 table-talk from François Genoud? I wish we could persuade Genoud to allow the publication of that text in the original language – and indeed to allow scholars to compare his text of the earlier table-talk with that of Picker, as now published by Percy Ernst Schramm. Are you at present in touch with Genoud? I have not corresponded with him for some time, and I am not sure of his present address. Is he still in Boulevard de la Forêt, Lausanne? As you probably know, Genoud's past is complicated and his activities interesting if obscure.⁶⁰

The whole episode is odd since Jäckel had obtained nothing of the sort. This paragraph refers to the notes ostensibly taken down by Martin Bormann in the spring of 1945, published with an introduction by Trevor-Roper as *The Testament of Adolf Hitler* in 1961, and sometimes called the *Bunkergespräche*, or even *Table Talk II*. By the end of the 1960s and the early 1970s several scholars were involved in trying to wrestle the German text of this document out of Genoud's hands and get his permission to publish it. Trevor-Roper was of course once again involved in this matter. From the outset, however, there were doubts as to the authenticity of this text,⁶¹ and Trevor-Roper's handling of these problems are symptomatic of his attitude to Genoud's documents in general.

On 25 October 1971, Trevor-Roper dined with Genoud in Lausanne. At that time, Genoud asked Trevor-Roper if he would be willing to take part in a publication of the German text of *The Testament*. Trevor-Roper apparently answered in a general manner, knowing, he said, that Genoud's words were one thing and his actions another. Some months later, though, Genoud told Baumgarten that Trevor-Roper had agreed to publish the work together with Genoud and Baumgarten, and on 15 May, 1972 the latter actually visited Trevor-Roper in Oxford regarding this matter. Baumgarten had his doubts about the whole affair because he had talked to Jäckel, who had apparently persuaded the German Federal Government to waive the copyright over Hitler's literary estate [it is unknown what is meant by this, M. N.], and who, because of this, had agreed to Genoud's proposition to publish the German text. It looked to Trevor-Roper as if Genoud 'chose to forget this agreement with Jäckel' when courting Trevor-Roper and Baumgarten on the same matter.⁶² Trevor-Roper noted that Baumgarten doubted Genoud's story about how he had obtained the second text. Genoud said that he had gotten it through Walter Funk, Director of the National Bank in the Third Reich, who he said had destroyed the original; Baumgarten thought that the story told by Genoud and his friend Hans Rechenberg was 'a falsification designed (presumably) to enable them to publish the document without producing the original.' At this point Baumgarten nevertheless thought that the text was genuine. Trevor-Roper stated that Baumgarten thought Genoud in fact had the original and that he had obtained it at the same time as the *Bormann-Vermerke*,

⁶⁰ Trevor-Roper to Jäckel, 26 May, 1969; CCLO; HTRP; VSD 6/6/1, pp. 1–2.

⁶¹ Ian Kershaw states that the 'tone of the monologues is unmistakably Hitler.' But he also notes that Hitler's many secretaries seem to have been unaware of these being taken down by anyone. At least one of them questioned their authenticity although she thought it might be a compilation of Hitler's thoughts. She even ruled out the possibility of Bormann having recorded Hitler's words precisely because of the fact that Hitler hated *ad verbatim* records of his off the cuff statements (Kershaw, I., *Hitler...*, p. 1024).

⁶² Undated typed memorandum by Trevor-Roper; CCLO; HTRP; VSD 6/6/1.

i.e. ‘from Frau Bormann in Merano, by purchase, and that he cannot publish the original, lest he be sued by Bormann’s heirs for infraction of their copyright.’ Trevor-Roper was not entirely convinced by this argument though.⁶³ But despite all these doubts Trevor-Roper unambiguously repeated the Funk story, basing it entirely on Genoud’s own account, in his preface to *Hitlers politisches Testament* in 1981, as he had twenty years earlier in the English edition.⁶⁴

Ian Kershaw views this text with considerable scepticism. He writes in his Hitler biography:

The main problem with the authenticity of the text is that no reliable and certifiable German version exists. It is impossible, therefore, to be certain. A great deal has to be taken on trust; and even then no safe mechanism for checking is available. [...] [The] English version contains a very loose and untrustworthy translation of the German text – itself not guaranteed to be identical with any long-lost original or the lost copy of that original – which was eventually published only in 1981 [...]. Further examination of the text in the meantime – though this was not mentioned by the German publishers – by Professor Eduard Baumgarten had established that the translation back into German from the French (carried out by a Dutchman) contained between the lines a second German text, written in the hand of François Genoud. The available German text is, therefore, at best a construct; neither the original nor the copy of that original exists. Baumgarten tended, since the content was consonant with Hitler’s thinking and expression, to accept the authenticity of the text. There is, however, no proof and, therefore, no reliable German text whose authenticity can be placed beyond question.⁶⁵

Much the same could naturally be said today about Genoud’s other manuscript, i.e. the *Bormann-Vermerke*, and thus about both *Table Talk* and *Monologe*. That too is lost in its original form, except for the few notes now deposited in the *Bundesarchiv*; the translation process was highly doubtful; the history of the manuscript from conception to publication is mysterious at best, and it is impossible to be sure that the majority of the entries are in fact authentic (i.e. actual statements by Hitler as opposed to things he *could* have said). They certainly *sound* like Hitler, but so does *The Testament*, and internal evidence is often not a good basis for proving authenticity. Trevor-Roper, Jäckel, and others would use precisely this reasoning when evaluating the forged Hitler diaries a decade later with devastating results, showing just how unreliable this method of authentication is.

In a letter to Baumgarten Trevor-Roper made some interesting comments about the manuscript. He listed three things that seemed to prove authenticity, namely: (1) Bormann’s signature on each page, (2) Genoud’s and Rechenberg’s accounts of its origin, and (3) its own internal evidence. Trevor-Roper said:

On these bases, I do not regard (1) and (2) as strong. Bormann’s signature could easily be forged, and Genoud and Rechenberg are not trustworthy witnesses.

Instead it was (3), the internal evidence and the fact that Trevor-Roper could not see why Genoud would have an interest in forging a Hitler document, which spoke most strongly for authenticity. That is indeed not a very strong, or good, case for authenticity. It is also quite astounding that Trevor-Roper could not imagine why Genoud would have an interest in forging a Hitler document. Trevor-Roper had, however, apparently been quite convinced of the document’s authenticity prior to this exchange with Baumgarten, because when answering a question regarding this point coming from David Irving in late 1967 (Irving thought it was a

⁶³ Undated typed memorandum entitled ‘François Genoud’ by Trevor-Roper; CCL0; HTRP; VSD 6/6/1, p. 1.

⁶⁴ *Hitlers politisches Testament. Die Bormann Diktate vom Februar und April 1945. Mit einem Essay von Hugh R. Trevor-Roper und einem Nachwort von André François-Poncet* (Hamburg: Albrecht Knaus Verlag, 1981), pp. 24–26. Willi Winkler has noted the same thing in his book (Winkler, W. *Der Schattenmann*, pp. 110–112).

⁶⁵ Kershaw, I., *Hitler...*, pp. 1024–1025.

forgery) he stated that the style and context, Bormann's signature, and Genoud's story about how the document came to him, and the fact that Trevor-Roper could not see the motives for Genoud to produce a forgery all pointed towards authenticity. Trevor-Roper did admit, though, that it was difficult to penetrate the mind of the perfect forger, and that highly qualified scholars had devoted enormous amounts of time to producing forgeries for nothing more than the private satisfaction of having fooled the experts. Because of this, Trevor-Roper wrote, one could not 'reason confidently in such a matter.' As the evidence stood, he was inclined to believe it was genuine.⁶⁶ Nevertheless, in public Trevor-Roper did in fact "reason confidently" with regard to Genoud's documents; in fact he never even hinted at any doubts or problems relating to them. By May 1969, after thinking about Irving's objections a good deal, he had become even surer about its authenticity. He also noted that Jäckel too was convinced.⁶⁷ However, once again there were issues connected to the reliability of the translation.

Trevor-Roper wrote to Baumgarten:

I now suspect that they concealed it [the German original] even from Colonel Stevens. You write that you have the impression ('dass Herr Stevens meist aus dem Französischen übersetzt hat (weil ungemein ähnlich)') and that he has only resorted to the German text where Genoud's French version was too free. This implies that Stevens had at his disposal both a French and a German text.

The latter was of course incorrect; Stevens had only used the French text when translating *The Testament*. Here Trevor-Roper is implying he has just discovered this fact, when as we shall see below it turns out that he had been informed about it on several previous occasions. Then he mentions the occasion when he, while working on the new edition of *Table Talk* in late 1972, discovered the mistake that proved to him that Stevens had indeed used Genoud's French edition for that translation. Trevor-Roper wrote:

In other words, I now think that Genoud supplied to Stevens not the German original but his own French version of 'T.T.1'; and he may easily have done the same with 'T.T.2'.⁶⁸

Had Trevor-Roper consulted his own correspondence with Stevens and Genoud from 1958 he would have seen that it was always made abundantly clear to him that Stevens translated *The Testament* (which is what Trevor-Roper calls T.T.2) from the French. On 26 April 1958 Genoud wrote to Trevor-Roper to tell him about this second set of Hitler monologues and wondered if he would like to read them, and Trevor-Roper replied that he would very much like to do that and asked Genoud to send him a copy. Genoud was of course delighted to hear this and in a letter on 16 May he told Trevor-Roper that he had already parted with his only *French* text. This text he had sent to Stevens for translation into English but he would ask Stevens to send this copy on to Trevor-Roper when he was done with it, or even better, the English translation made from it. That was, apparently, the first time Trevor-Roper was made aware of the fact that *The Testament*, too, was translated from the French, not the German. The so-called 'original' in German Genoud did not want to part with, he said, because the rights of Hitler's heirs were not protected. He could, however, show Trevor-Roper the

⁶⁶ Irving to Trevor-Roper, 24 November, 1967; Trevor-Roper to Irving, 20 December 1967, p. 2; CCLO; HTRP; VSD 6/21.

⁶⁷ Trevor-Roper to Irving, 26 May, 1969; Trevor-Roper to Irving, 20 December 1967, p. 2; CCLO; HTRP; VSD 6/21.

⁶⁸ Trevor-Roper to Baumgarten, 18 March, 1973; CCLO; HTRP; VSD 6/6/1, p. 2. [Translation: ('that Mr. Stevens translated mostly from the French (because it is extremely similar)').]

German text on location in Switzerland.⁶⁹ In early June of 1958, Stevens wrote to Trevor-Roper and said that he had received Genoud's French notes and that he would translate them and send Trevor-Roper the text as soon as it was completed. That was the second time Trevor-Roper was made aware of the same fact. Trevor-Roper then thanked Stevens warmly and suggested that they should meet in London after he had read it. Stevens sent Trevor-Roper the translated text on 24 June 1958.⁷⁰ Trevor-Roper then wrote to Genoud in early October saying that he had received Stevens' translation and that he had found it 'very interesting'.⁷¹ The question is how Trevor-Roper could possibly have forgotten all of this, even if over a decade had passed. And while one could perhaps forgive Trevor-Roper for not remembering this in 1973 it is not possible to do the same with regard to the English edition from 1961. Despite all of what has been said above *The Testament* stated that it was 'translated from the German by Colonel R. H. Stevens'.⁷² That was obviously not true. In fact, it was a blatant lie. The book also claimed, on its title page, that the text had been 'edited' by Genoud although nothing was said in it as to what this editing consisted of.⁷³

But the story was to take yet another turn. In a critical volume on the document published as *The Testament* and *Le testament politique* that was in the last stages of production, Baumgarten censored Trevor-Roper's critical judgment regarding both the reliability of Bormann's signature on the now vanished photocopies, and Genoud's claims about the manuscript's history. The book, which was to be published in August 1973 by Piper Verlag, was entitled *Hitlers Letzte Rechenschaft* and the publisher even advertised the date of publication before it was abruptly stopped when Genoud suddenly refused to let Baumgarten publish it.⁷⁴ In the book Baumgarten discussed, in detail, the history of the document and also made a considerable effort to prove its authenticity. He did this by including quotations from Trevor-Roper taken from their correspondence on the matter, letting Trevor-Roper once again become a champion of the authenticity of Genoud's dubious document. Trevor-Roper was even sent the proofs for the book. However, when it came to Trevor-Roper's rather brutal rejection of most of the proofs of the documents' authenticity, Baumgarten resorted to misinformation. Instead of allowing his readers to see Trevor-Roper's assessment of the source, he asked him if he could replace the damaging words with something different, such as with the phrase 'I do not regard (1) and (2) as unassailable by distrustful critics.' Baumgarten wrote by hand in the margin of the proof sent to Trevor-Roper:

may I change your wording in this manner – instead of saying: 'Bormann's signature could easily be forged, and Genoud and Rechenberg are not trustworthy witnesses' [You wrote this in private and would perhaps not like to see it 'put in print' – (see your letter of 18. March!)]⁷⁵
[Underlined in original.]

By this addendum Baumgarten showed that he understood exactly what harm these words could do to Trevor-Roper and *The Testament*, and perhaps indirectly to *Table Talk* as well. Trevor-Roper replied that he accepted this change, but added that he would 'prefer the prudently amended passage' of his letter to say that '(1) and (2) are clearly not unassailable',

⁶⁹ Genoud to Trevor-Roper, 26 April 1958; Trevor-Roper to Genoud, 6 May 1958; Genoud to Trevor-Roper, 16 May 1958; CCLO; HTRP; VSD 6/6/2.

⁷⁰ Stevens to Trevor-Roper, 2 June 1958; Trevor-Roper to Stevens, 13 June 1958; Stevens to Trevor-Roper, 24 June 1958; CCLO; HTRP; VSD 6/6/2.

⁷¹ Trevor-Roper to Genoud, 1 October 1958; CCLO; HTRP; VSD 6/6/2.

⁷² *The Testament of Adolf Hitler*..., see title page.

⁷³ Ibid. It could be referring to the chapter headings, which were completely authored by Genoud.

⁷⁴ Advertisement from Piper Verlag in 1973; Baumgarten to Trevor-Roper, 16 July, 1973, pp. 1–15; CCLO; HTRP; VSD 6/6/2.

⁷⁵ See proofs 'Anhang I'; CCLO; HTRP; VSD 6/6/1, p. 3.

and stop there.⁷⁶ The essence of this change was the same – it concealed Trevor-Roper's much stronger doubts about the text's authenticity from the readers. The reason that it matters, even though the book was never published, is that it shows that Trevor-Roper was prepared, on occasion, to cut corners in order to make Genoud's texts seem more trustworthy than they actually were. Moreover, taken together with all the other similar incidents shown thus far in this article it also establishes a tendency on Trevor-Roper's part to keep information like this from the public.

Trevor-Roper may of course have had good reasons to assume that the documents were genuine because, as he told Baumgarten in March 1973, he had seen:

a photocopy of it. It had to be shown to me, for I would not have accepted its authenticity otherwise. It may, of course, even so, be a forgery; and it could be that Genoud's reluctance to reveal it springs from a fear of exposure. On the other hand, he has been equally reluctant to reveal his German text of 'T.T.1' [Table Talk] and we know that T.T.1 is perfectly genuine; and he has refused to publish the German text of the Bormann letters, whose authenticity, is unquestioned. Therefore it seems that we must look elsewhere for the cause of his sensitivity.⁷⁷

However, one document cannot be assumed to be genuine just because other documents from the same source are genuine (not even if that issue was beyond dispute). Moreover, the authenticity of Genoud's *Bormann-Vermerke* could by no means be taken for granted since it had never been critically examined. Furthermore, Trevor-Roper had stated unambiguously in the introduction to *The Testament* in 1961 that 'of their authenticity there can be no doubt: their history, their content and Bormann's own familiar signature attest it at every point.'⁷⁸ That is an impressive endorsement for a document that he had only briefly seen in photocopy. There was no mention of the doubts that he expressed to Baumgarten. Trevor-Roper obviously did nothing to correct this view before the publication of the German edition in 1981 where one could still read that:

Sie sind zweifellos echt: Ihre Geschichte, ihr Inhalt und Bormanns wohlvertraute Unterschrift bezeugen dies.⁷⁹

The statement by Trevor-Roper that he had seen a photocopy of the original with Bormann's signature on it of course sounds reassuring, and it renders more plausible the idea that the text may be genuine. But can we trust him? Had he in fact seen Bormann's signature on each page? Perhaps not, since his memory seems to have been rather poor and selective at times. In his correspondence with Baumgarten Trevor-Roper wrote that he had:

never seen anything written in Bormann's own hand except his monogram. I am told that Bormann had lost one or more fingers of his right hand, and that this is the reason for his monogram, which is distinctive but loose and ungainly. This would explain why his own handwriting is not to be seen.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ Trevor-Roper to Baumgarten, 26 May, 1973; CCLO; HTRP; VSD 6/6/1, p. 1.

⁷⁷ Trevor-Roper to Baumgarten, 18 March, 1973; CCLO; HTRP; VSD 6/6/1, p. 3. Genoud and his companion Hans Rechenberg later told Baumgarten that Trevor-Roper had brought with him a colleague from Oxford who had examined the photocopy and concluded it was genuine. The photocopy had been returned the same day, according to Genoud and Rechenberg (Baumgarten to Trevor-Roper, 13 March, 1973; CCLO; HTRP; VSD 6/6/1, p. 3). However, this was a lie (and it was not the only lie about this meeting they had fed to Baumgarten). Trevor-Roper had not brought anyone with him and he had only been allowed to see the document in the hotel in Paris (Trevor-Roper to Baumgarten, 18 March, 1973; CCLO; HTRP; VSD 6/6/1, p. 1).

⁷⁸ *The Testament of Adolf Hitler*..., p. 11.

⁷⁹ *Hitlers politisches Testament*..., p. 26. [Translation: They are undoubtedly authentic: their history, content, and Bormann's familiar signature attest to this.]

⁸⁰ Trevor-Roper to Baumgarten, 18 March, 1973; CCLO; HTRP; VSD 6/6/1, p. 1.

This is an astounding statement indeed, especially if we consider the fact that Trevor-Roper had included facsimiles containing Bormann's handwriting in both *Table Talk* and *The Bormann Letters*. Trevor-Roper subsequently had to admit to Baumgarten that he had 'evidently' forgotten about this fact (although he only mentioned *Table Talk* explicitly, which could indicate that he remained oblivious of the facsimile in the latter book).⁸¹ This only goes to show that Trevor-Roper is not a reliable witness even when it comes to what he had himself seen or heard. We simply cannot take him on his word regarding this fact, or regarding much at all.

The introduction to *Hitlers politisches Testament* is also strange for another reason. At the end is added the following phrase: '(unveränderter Wortlaut des Textes von 1961)' – a phrase referring to Trevor-Roper's English introduction.⁸² Firstly, a translation into another language cannot possibly be said to preserve the wording of the text. Secondly, it was obviously not true since the introduction contains proof that text *was* added because Trevor-Roper writes the following regarding the history of the *Bormann-Vermerke*:

Erst 1980 erschienen sie auch in Deutschland unter dem Titel 'Monologe im Führerhauptquartier 1941/42', nach Heinrich Heims Aufzeichnungen von Werner Jochmann herausgegeben.⁸³

This, naturally, was not in the English edition of 1961 and thus the text was not unchanged. Perhaps Trevor-Roper did not consider this a 'change' of the text and intended only to assure the reader that the text was 'basically' the same.

Furthermore, Baumgarten told Trevor-Roper that Genoud had added introductions to each note in *Hitlers politisches Testament*.⁸⁴ This information is also interesting for another reason, namely that these summaries are not the same in the English and German editions. They differ, and sometimes markedly so, in several places; in fact no chapter summary in the English edition is exactly the same as those in the German edition published 20 years later.⁸⁵ However, the English chapter summaries are identical to the ones in the French edition.⁸⁶ None of this was mentioned in the German edition, either by the publisher or by Trevor-Roper. Yet he took care to make the point that the introduction was unchanged – even though it was not.

None of the document's dubious history was mentioned in the publisher's foreword either (which may have been written by Werner Jochmann, who published *Monologe*) and the readers were simply told that Genoud had been given a photocopy of the original by his friend Rechenberg (who in his turn was said to have gotten it from Funk). Since nothing was said about the subsequent loss of the photocopy, or of the retranslation into German from the French, the readers were thus led to believe that Genoud still possessed the photocopy and

⁸¹ Trevor-Roper to Baumgarten, 26 May, 1973; CCLO; HTRP; VSD 6/6/1, p. 1.

⁸² *Hitlers politisches Testament...*, p. 40. We have no reason to believe that it was not Trevor-Roper who wrote this. Whenever the publisher added something to the text it seems to have been clearly indicated (c.f. *ibid.*, pp. 20–21). [Translation: unchanged wording of the text from 1961.]

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 20. Note that Trevor-Roper gives the wrong time span for the documents in Jochmann's book, which includes the same period as his own English edition.

[Translation: They only appeared in 1980 in Germany under the title 'Monologe im Führerhauptquartier 1941/42', based on the notes by Heinrich Heim and edited by Werner Jochmann.]

⁸⁴ Baumgarten to Trevor-Roper, 13 March, 1973; CCLO; HTRP; VSD 6/6/1, pp. 6–7.

⁸⁵ *The Testament of Adolf Hitler...*, pp. 29, 38, 42, 47, 50, 58, 63, 67, 68–69, 76, 79, 82, 87, 93, 96, 101, 103; *Hitlers politisches Testament...*, pp. 42, 50, 54, 60, 64, 72, 78, 81–82, 84, 91, 95, 98, 103, 109, 113, 117, 120. There is perhaps one possible exception to this, namely the summary for the very short note IX, which is basically the same in both versions although the translation is very free.

⁸⁶ For this, see: *Le testament politique de Hitler...*

that the book in front of them was in turn based upon that original text.⁸⁷ Such was not the case, however, and this became just the last in a long line of deceptions concerning this source, although in this instance it is not something that Trevor-Roper can be held responsible for.

Then, in January 1975, Baumgarten wrote Trevor-Roper to tell him the great news that he had at last managed to get his hands on ‘den Urtext’, the original, of *Hitlers politisches Testament*. But it was of course not really the original at all. Instead, it was a typed copy of a typed copy of a photocopy, or an ‘Abschrift von Abschrift von Fotokopie’ as Baumgarten put it. Nonetheless, Baumgarten was certain that the text was genuine. He also asked Trevor-Roper if he remembered seeing the words ‘Äusserungen des Führers’ on the top of every page.⁸⁸ Trevor-Roper stated that he did not. He added that his natural reaction was ‘to feel that, if I had seen it, I would have positively remembered it.’ He did remember seeing Bormann’s signature on each page, but he could not say that the words listed by Baumgarten were there. On the other hand, he could not say that they were not there either.⁸⁹ Despite this, Trevor-Roper also accepted this as being the original text, and congratulated Baumgarten on his ‘diplomacy and perseverance’, saying that he never really believed that Baumgarten would succeed in ‘extracting from Genoud the original German text of that document.’ It was ‘a miracle’, according to him, ‘and a very useful miracle too, enabling you to settle the vexed problem of authenticity.’ Exactly how the issue of authenticity could be settled by a copy of a copy of a copy, or why this document should be referred to as ‘the original’, Trevor-Roper left unsaid.

By 1978, however, Trevor-Roper apparently doubted the authenticity of this text again. He even wrote to Genoud asking him to tell the truth about the authenticity of the text because both Irving and Baumgarten believed it was a forgery (Baumgarten had by then obviously changed his mind). To calm Trevor-Roper down Genoud sent him a copy of a letter from 1959 which supposedly came from Dr. Hans-Heinrich Lammers, former Chief of the Reich Chancellery, who attested to the fact that words attributed to Hitler present in the manuscript seemed to remind him of things he had heard the Führer utter during the time Lammers’ was working closely with him. It had a signature that supposedly was Lammers’ as well.⁹⁰ Of course, this was not at all a validation of the documents’ authenticity, it simply was – at best – an indication that resembled something that Hitler had at some point uttered.

What Trevor-Roper thought of this at the time is unknown, but in correspondence with Richard Carrier in 2002 he stated that this ‘supports the claim of authenticity, but because of lingering doubts I have never cited the work as evidence.’ How something could support a document’s claim of authenticity, and at the same time be so unconvincing that Trevor-Roper

⁸⁷ *Hitlers politisches Testament...*, p. 12. The reason for assuming that Jochmann was involved in writing this foreword, officially attributed to *Der Verlag*, i.e. the publisher, is that Albrecht Knaus and Jochmann corresponded about the subject of this document and Knaus’ plans for publishing it. Knaus wanted Jochmann’s opinion on several issues regarding the publication, including whether or not to include both the French and English introductions in translation. But most significantly, he asked Jochmann if he wanted to oversee this publication as well. Although Jochmann’s reply has not been preserved in his archive, we know that he asked for, and received, the German text (which Knaus had obtained from Genoud) as well as the published translations (For this, see: Werner Jochmann Nachlaß (in the hands of Professor Ursula Büttner, Hamburg); Binder: ‘Schriftwechsel A–K 1977’; Letter from Knaus to Jochmann, 17 July 1980, pp. 1–2; Letter from Knaus to Jochmann, 25 July 1980).

⁸⁸ Baumgarten to Trevor-Roper, 17 January, 1975; CCLO; HTRP; VSD 6/6/1, pp. 1–2. [Translation: Utterances by the Führer.]

⁸⁹ Trevor-Roper to Baumgarten, 24 January, 1975; CCLO; HTRP; VSD 6/6/1. It is not at all clear what text Trevor-Roper saw since he had no possibility of examining it properly or comparing it to the version that was later published.

⁹⁰ Trevor-Roper to Genoud, undated but around New Year’s 1977; Genoud to Trevor-Roper, 6 January, 1978 and Lammers to Genoud 31 March, 1959; CCLO; HTRP; VSD 6/6/2.

did not dare to cite it is not entirely clear. Let us also remember that in his introduction to this this same document Trevor-Roper had asserted that its authenticity was beyond doubt. But even if it was to be shown to be a forgery Trevor-Roper did not think that Genoud was behind it, he told Carrier. That would have been contrary to Genoud's interests, he reasoned, because if Genoud had been exposed it would damage the standing of the genuine documents that he had collected. Instead, Trevor-Roper's suspicions fell on Hans Rechenberg.⁹¹ But how could a forgery be exposed when there was no purported original?

In addition, Trevor-Roper wrote that he had always found Genoud to be straightforward, although somewhat difficult to deal with because of his unwillingness to show his original documents (which Trevor-Roper still ascribed to nervousness about copyright). He did not believe that Genoud deliberately distorted the texts (something Carrier had already proven to be the case), but added that 'I have not made a close textual study.' This is a fairly clear admission that Trevor-Roper had no idea if the texts he had validated were genuine or not.⁹² Trevor-Roper did not comment on Carrier's findings that Genoud's French translation could not be trusted.⁹³

Explaining Trevor-Roper's Omissions

We can get a good idea as to why Trevor-Roper never mentioned anything about the questionable nature of the documents he validated in public through some of his private correspondence. Following an article about Genoud in *The Sunday Times* in July 1967 Trevor-Roper wrote to the newspaper's foreign editor, Frank Giles, asking if he could get some more information on Genoud from Giles or from Ingrid Etter, the author of the article. Trevor-Roper stated, privately and confidentially, that he knew Genoud 'personally quite well, and have always had good relations with him.' He continued by saying that he knew that some of his activities were 'pretty shady' but that he never pressed Genoud about them. The reason was that Genoud, according to Trevor-Roper could be 'very useful as a source, if carefully handled.' Trevor-Roper continued with the following enlightening phrase:

I hope, one day, to make some further discoveries through him, provided my good relations with him remain undamaged: we operate on the basis that each knows the other and play fair.⁹⁴

This is probably one of the main reasons for why Trevor-Roper was willing to overlook some of the more suspicious features of Genoud's texts. The German journalist Willi Winkler, in his biography of Genoud, cites a letter from Trevor-Roper to an American college student (in fact, he was a doctoral student) written in 1964 where he said basically the same thing, i.e. that he had some doubts regarding Genoud's sources but he refrained from saying anything about them because he did not want to lose his credit with Genoud.⁹⁵ Trevor-Roper wrote:

When he [Genoud] has a document which he wants to publish, he relies on me to vouch for its genuineness, if I think it genuine: that is all. Of course I have my suspicions about his sources, but I keep the bargain too and do not express them!⁹⁶

Trevor-Roper thus refrained from posing the difficult questions about Genoud's sources in public because he was afraid to lose access to Genoud as a source of important historical documents – but in private he could be quite critical of Genoud and the documents he

⁹¹ Trevor-Roper to Carrier, 17 October, 2002, pp. 3–4; a copy of the letter was sent to the author by Carrier.

⁹² Trevor-Roper to Carrier, 17 October, 2002, p. 2; a copy of the letter was sent to the author by Carrier.

⁹³ Trevor-Roper to Carrier, 17 October, 2002, p. 2; a copy of the letter was sent to the author by Carrier.

⁹⁴ Trevor-Roper to Giles, 11 July, 1967; CCLO; HTRP; VSD 6/6/1.

⁹⁵ Winkler, *W. Der Schattenmann...*, p. 82.

⁹⁶ Trevor-Roper to Schmier, 18 February, 1964; CCLO; HTRP; VSD 1/1/S (File: Schmier).

supplied. He did on occasion express his doubts directly to Genoud, but he never let his readers (be it the lay public or professional historians, apart from a few friends) know about them. The reason, it can be assumed, was that Trevor-Roper probably knew that if he failed to validate one of Genoud's documents the latter would then surely have gone to someone else the next time he wanted to publish a Nazi document. Still, Trevor-Roper did not really need to do all of this in order to build his own career. From 1957 he held the prestigious position of Regius Professor of Modern History at Oxford and could therefore easily have afforded to be more critical of Genoud and his documents. Of the texts discussed in this article it was only the first edition of *Table Talk* that was published before his academic career was safe and secure for life. With time, of course, Trevor-Roper invested a considerable amount of his professional credibility in these documents, and the longer this went on the more difficult it became for him to express misgivings regarding the authenticity or reliability of documents that he had publically validated as genuine.

Trevor-Roper's biographer Adam Sisman points out that the letters to his literary agent show just how acutely aware he was of his value to newspapers, magazines, and book publishers who turned to him in order to get a seal of approval as well as editorial commentary. This had a pecuniary side to it as well, both to Trevor-Roper and Genoud. Trevor-Roper gained financially as an expert validator of Hitler documents – thanks in part to Genoud's material. And Genoud's documents increased considerably in value after Trevor-Roper had gone on record attesting to their authenticity. Trevor-Roper's career as a Hitler expert had in fact started already when he published his famous book *The Last Days of Hitler* in 1947, a book that had propelled him to fame.⁹⁷ This financial interest, too, may be part of the explanation for Trevor-Roper's tendency to leave out critical information when it came to these documents.

As is well known, Trevor-Roper's stature and credibility as a historian diminished considerably after he made the rather unfortunate decision to authenticate the so-called Hitler diaries. These diaries were forged by a man named Konrad Kujau and in April 1983 the issue blew up when the German magazine *Stern*, which had bought the rights to publish them, made their sensational discovery public. Trevor-Roper initially stated publically that he thought the diaries were genuine; it was only later (too late, for his reputation) that he changed his mind voiced doubts about his own initial judgement. The circumstances surrounding the Hitler diaries were very similar to those surrounding the Genoud documents. There was a lot of secrecy regarding their history, the provenance of the sources was unclear, and the authentication process included no forensic testing (once this was made on the Hitler diaries the forgery was conclusively proven, but no such analysis has ever been made on Genoud's documents). As with the Genoud documents, the judgement of authenticity was based almost entirely on so-called internal evidence in the texts themselves. The list could be made longer.⁹⁸ Before he changed his mind, however, Trevor-Roper went on record stating that the diaries were the most important historical discovery of the 1980s and 'a scoop of Watergate proportions.'⁹⁹ Neither of these statements was even Trevor-Roper's originally, but the creation of a *Stern* editor who attributed them to Trevor-Roper with his reluctant permission.⁹⁹

Conclusion

This article has looked at the history of Trevor-Roper's actions in connection with the publication of *Table Talk* and *The Testament*, the purported sources for Hitler's most inner-

⁹⁷ Sisman, A., *Hugh Trevor-Roper...*, pp. 302, 476.

⁹⁸ For this and more, see: Harris, Robert, *Selling Hitler* (London: Arrow Books 2009 (1st edition by Faber & Faber Ltd, 1986)), pp. 252–335.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 276–277.

most thoughts. It has focused on the following questions: What did the process leading up to the publication of the *Table Talk* and *The Testament* look like, and what was Trevor-Roper's role in this process? In the article we have seen numerous examples of how Trevor-Roper failed to tell his readers vital information about his source material that would most likely have had a negative effect on the credibility of that material, affecting both the original manuscripts' claims to authenticity and the reputation for accuracy of the translations.

Trevor-Roper did this on at least four separate occasions, namely in connection with the publication of *Table Talk* in 1953; the publication of *The Testament of Adolf Hitler* in 1961; the publication of the second edition of *Table Talk* in 1973; and the publication of *Hitlers politisches Testament* in 1981. A fifth such incident was when he, also in 1973, allowed Baumgarten to change his statements regarding the reliability and authenticity of *The Testament* text. One could in fact count the third edition of *Table Talk*, published by Oxford University Press in 1988, as the sixth instance because it was a re-print of the first edition without any additional note by Trevor-Roper on the dubious translation process. All of this clearly demonstrates a pattern in Trevor-Roper's handling of Genoud's documents, namely that he kept his doubts about them to himself and was prepared to relinquish certain source critical principles when publishing them.

Trevor-Roper acted as a contact for Genoud and provided the latter with publication opportunities for his documents. At the same time he acted as an expert validator for those same documents. The fact that Trevor-Roper stood to gain not only academic prestige but also financially from his relationship with Genoud makes his role as a validator even more problematic. It made him prone to overlook some very compromising facts about the documents Genoud provided him with. This article has argued that Trevor-Roper's actions can best be explained by reference to Trevor-Roper's dependence on Genoud for documents. On several occasions, albeit in private, Trevor-Roper made it quite clear that the reason why he did not question Genoud's documents was that he wished to be the one that Genoud turned to when he desired to publish new Nazi material. We have also seen that Trevor-Roper often cannot be trusted when it comes to his own recollections of what he had seen or not seen. On the other hand, it has been confirmed that Trevor-Roper never undertook a detailed study of the texts that formed the basis for *Table Talk* and *The Testament*, and that he thus did not have any grounds for attesting to their authenticity even on content grounds.

With regard to the scandal surrounding the Hitler diaries it should be pointed out that the rather sloppy manner in which Trevor-Roper went about authenticating those forgeries had many parallels with his dealings with Genoud and his documents. This article has thus been able to show that Trevor-Roper's handling of the Hitler diaries was not an oddity in an otherwise spotless past, but rather falls into a pattern that had been well established more than 30 years earlier. Just as the potential historical significance of the documents provided to him by Genoud was allowed to cloud his professional judgement, so did the potential importance of the Hitler diaries. Especially to be seen in the Hitler diaries affair is Trevor-Roper's tendency to keep his doubts away from public view.

What has come to light in this article thus underlines the need for a thorough investigation of both the *Bormann-Vermerke* and Picker's original manuscript (if they are still extant somewhere), in addition to the history of the various translated editions based on them in order to sort out what can be trusted to be a relatively good representation of Hitler's views and words and what cannot. The need for a critical and comparative edition of the various texts has never seemed more urgent. It would also be necessary to continue the comparative and critical study of the English, French, and the two German editions begun by Carrier in

order to further determine what parts of *Table Talk* have been based on the French and which have not. A lot of work still remains to be done.¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ The author of this article is currently undertaking a three-year project ending in January 2018 focused on these issues.