



He saw religion reborn in Russia

EDUCATION

Master Tongue of Dr. Pei

When Australia's fair sticks and sninnies throw a shivoo, it's always more a matter of fiddlydids than triddlybits. And just as in America, many cliners and cobbers smooch with the wrong people, although some, of course, remain dinkie die. Even a wartime liquor shortage doesn't interfere: on a real larrikin you can get just as shikkered on plonk as anything else.*

To Dr. Mario Pei, there's nothing to be gained by ignoring the fact that differences not only in pronunciation but in idiom and slang often make it difficult for those who theoretically speak the same language to understand one another. Hence in his widely known War Linguistics Courses at Columbia University the Italian-born professor acts accordingly. With the aid of a unique, quadruple-jointed textbook which he wrote himself, he teaches future officers and government workers the variations of the English language—from New Zealand to the British Isles. But more intriguing, the students get in the same course a workable skeleton outline of the seven other languages with which a person can be understood anywhere in the world: German, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Russian, and Japanese. They also learn how to recognize 30 others.

Even this is not enough for Dr. Pei. Although he himself can handle 30 of the 250 tongues he can recognize, his linguistic ability falls far short of the 2,769 separate languages spoken throughout the world. Thus he concludes that no one else will do much better than he

*When Australia's good guys and gals throw a party, it's more a matter of pounds than threepence. And just as in America, many boys and girls smooch with the wrong people, although some, of course, remain true blue. Even a wartime liquor shortage doesn't interfere: on a real spree you can get just as drunk on wine as anything else.

has, and that the only solution for nations with a growing world consciousness is a common language.

Away with Q,W,X: Last week Mario Pei was ready with his contribution to this end—a hitherto unpublished phonetic alphabet. It eliminates three "superfluous" symbols, Q, W, and X, and adds five new ones: one from the Greek, one from the international phonetic alphabet, one from the Icelandic, and two from the Cyrillic alphabet. Pei then suggests the international use of English, since it is "probably the most widespread of all." Moreover, it is grammatically "comparatively simple," syntactically "direct and straightforward to the point of bluntness," and has a vocabulary of "the world's most fortunate blend of two great linguistic stocks, the Germanic and the Latin-Romance, with plenty of Greek and other languages thrown in."

But as every American knows, English has one tremendous drawback—its complex spelling. Phonetics would eliminate this difficulty and still make use of the tongue's advantages. The most important points of Pei's plan:

There should be "an invariable sound for each symbol; an invariable symbol for each sound"—giving different symbols to words like *though, through, cough, and plough*.

The so-called "long" sounds of *a, i, o, and u* are actually diphthongs. For example, the long *a* of *late* is really the *e* of *met* quickly followed by the *i* of *it*; the long *u* of *use* is the *i* of *it* quickly followed by the *u* of *rude*, etc. The child of the future could much more easily associate *rait* with the sounds now conveyed by *right, rite, write, and wright*, although it is difficult for us.

Obviously a given symbol used in other languages constructed on Greek, Roman, Gothic, or Cyrillic characters may be pronounced differently than in English. (The vowel sounds of *lot, cot,*



Dr. Pei, the global linguist

not, etc., in most languages is indicated by *a* rather than *o*.) Thus a compromise between languages would be necessary, using the pronunciation of a particular symbol which is already most preferred.

Dates to Remember

All the adults quizzed in the mining town of Herrin, Ill., knew that prohibition started in 1920, but that was the only bright spot of historical knowledge in the country. By contrast, two Dallas, Texas, people had forgotten that the present war started in 1939, and four non-Republicans were unaware that the New Deal began in 1933.

The United Press survey which brought these results was prompted last week by a release on the recently completed study by the Committee on American History in Schools and Colleges. Although the full report will not be published until Dec. 28, Dr. Edgar B. Wesley, chairman of the committee and

professor of social studies at the University of Minnesota, had previously revealed that American children were no as dumb as some reports indicated when it came to the history of their country (NEWSWEEK, Nov. 15). Now he says that the reason they don't remember dates is that teachers try to cram "a whole barrelful" down their throats. Actually they should be taught only 33 historical dates—in this order.

Grammar School: 1492, the discover of America; 1620, landing of the Pilgrims; 1607, settlement of Jamestown; 1776, Declaration of Independence; 1519, Magellan's voyage; 1763, French and Indian War; 1819, acquisition of Florida; 1789, inauguration of Washington; 1848, acquisition of Mexican territory; 1803, Louisiana Purchase.

Junior High: 1775, beginning of Revolutionary War; 1787, Constitution Convention; 1793, invention of cotton gin; 1876, Centennial Exposition; 1781, surrender of Cornwallis; 1807, invention of the steamboat; 1812, second war against England; 1869, completion of first transcontinental railroad; 1820, Missouri Compromise; 1844, first successful telegraph; 1861, beginning of Civil War.

Senior High: 1619, first American legislature meets in Virginia; 1649, Termination Act of Maryland; 1817, agreement with Canada; 1933, the New Deal; 1857, Dred Scott decision; 1765, the Stamp Act; 1887, Interstate Commerce Commission; 1898, war with Spain; 1823, Monroe Doctrine; 1914, beginning of World War; 1920, Nineteenth Amendment; 1939, beginning of the second World War.

An early objector to Wesley's selection of dates was Hugh Russell Fraser, chairman of the Committee on American History and idea man for The New York Times's history quiz (NEWSWEEK, Apr. 19). The grade-school student, he said, should be required to know only the dates—and not things like Magellan

Aur Fǎðyr, hū (huio) ǎrt in hévyn,
háloud bī þai neim, þai kíngdom kam, þai uil.
bī don an ǎrð ǎz it iz in hévyn; giv os þis
dei aur déili bred, and forǎiv os aur dets
(tréspysyz) ǎz uī forǎiv aur détyrs (þouz
hū tréspyǎ yǎenst os), ǎnd líð os nat íntu
tempteíuyn, bot dílívyr os fram ívyl. (Fǒr
þain iz þy kíngdom, ǎnd þy páuyr, ǎnd þy
glóri, forevyr). Amén.

- The five new symbols:
- Θ, θ From the Greek, representing the th as pronounced in thin.
 - Ð, ð From the Icelandic, representing the th as pronounced in this.
 - Ń, ń From the International Phonetic Alphabet, representing the diphthong ng, as in song.
 - Ш, ш From the Slavic, representing the sh as pronounced in she.
 - Ж, ж From the Slavic, representing the zh as pronounced in azure.

The Lord's Prayer written in Pei's invariable symbols . . . and the five non-English characters he has chosen