

WORLD LANGUAGE NOW POSSIBLE

IT HAS long been a dream of scholars and diplomats that if the world could have one language for the human race there would follow an opportunity for mutual understanding of the various racial groups, a big factor in abolishing war. In fact, since work was stopped on the Tower of Babel because of the conflict of tongues, men have wanted to understand each other. So long as distances were great and the means of transportation and communication difficult it was not such a serious matter that these various racial groups should not come to know each other and to understand each other.

The radio and the airplane have changed all that. Now there must be a common denominator — one language common to all, in addition to the individual's native language. The universal language must be English and this for many reasons. For one thing 200,000,000 people, or roughly one tenth of the world's population, already speak it. Previous attempts to have artificial languages adopted have not succeeded. Such attempts included the following: Volapuk (1879), then Esperanto (1887), then Interlingua, Universala, Kosmos, Novilatin, Ro, Ido, Occidental, and Basic English. Now at long last, thanks to the genius of Robert L. Owen, former U. S. Senator from Oklahoma, there has been worked out by him a Global Alphabet. This is a phonetic stenographic alphabet of 33 letters, using letters having one immutable primary sound of the human voice, with no silent letter, and the forms simplified to the last degree humanly possible for perfect legibility and speed with writing with a pen. With this alphabet, the people of any language in the world can write their own language and print it stenographically. Only 1,200 words and their derivatives are necessary for day to day conversation.

The difficulty with the alphabets which exist is their conflict with each other. They use the same letters with different meanings. The number of letters employed in the languages of the fifty United Nations will average less than 33 letters. The number of letters which Moses used to write Genesis was 23 consonants and 10 diacritical marks, by which vowels might be inserted if the writer wished, or left out if he wished.

In this record you will find that Russia uses 33 letters only. Russia has made the most tremendous advance in overcoming illiteracy since the Revolution in 1917. That Revolution, explains Senator Owen, resulted in the adoption of a 33 letter alphabet which any Russian could learn to read in one day and by which an intensive educa-

tional campaign was carried on in Russia, going from the kindergarten to the elementary and high schools, thence to the universities and the technological laboratories and to the factories dealing with technological matters. "What has taken place in Russia," Senator Owen points out, "has removed the deadly blight of illiteracy in Russia." From the literacy of 9 per cent, they have now developed a literacy of over 90 per cent.

This Global Alphabet of Senator Owen's does not eliminate the learning in the libraries or the laboratories; but makes it accessible.

The Russians are teaching the English language now as fast as they can, by publications of the Russian Government.

The full details of Senator Owen's Global Alphabet cannot be given within the brief compass of this article. The pamphlet entitled *Global Alphabet* contains 81 pages and merits the study of thoughtful, peace-loving citizens. A copy of it may be obtained from Robert L. Owen, President, World Language Foundation, 2400 Sixteenth Street, N. W., Washington 9, D. C., or from the United States Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C. The full title is: "Global Alphabet, Hearing before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 79th Congress, First Session, on Making English a World Language, November 7, 1945. Printed for the use of the Committee on Foreign Relations." S. W.

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Universal RR Language Seen As War Result

IN NORTH AFRICA—It appears that a universal railroad language may come from operations in the various war theatres, where lack of a uniform nomenclature frequently causes difficulty.

For instance, the British call a freight car a "wagon." The American car designed for carrying liquids is, of course, a tank car, but the British use the word "cistern" instead. Since the advent of the fighting tank the term tank car has often been confusing. A fighting tank is carried on a flat car known as a war flat.

The "brake van," differs from anything used on American roads, though it is being supplied now in theatres of operations. North African railroads employ hand brakes, not air brakes, and the brake vans, in which a man sits in the cupola and applies or releases the brakes, as the whistle is sounded by the engineer, are spaced throughout the trains.

Twenty American-built locomotives which hauled trainloads of ammunition and other supplies in France, during World War I are once more in military service under the Stars and Stripes, but this time in North Africa. They are of the "Pershing" type and were among a large number sold to France after the Armistice. They have been in service on the French-owned Algerian and Morocco railroads. They were taken hold of by the Railway Shop Battalions of the Transportation Corps and soon were about as serviceable as ever.