

The World Language

A story about a contemporary issue from somewhat different viewpoint

”Utter nonsense! Be serious! Why do you support the idea of a neutral international language? The language barriers fell long ago. Everyone speaks the new international language of business and culture now”!

When Theodore left the building in the centre of Budapest, where he had just had a job interview, the words of the interviewer were still ringing in his head. Maybe he should not have mentioned his interest in that conventional neutral international language. “A filthy artificial mishmash, which would rob humanity of its culture!” in the words of the firm’s deputy director. Theodore knew he had lost all chance of getting the post because of it.

He bought the magazine *Die Finanzielle Zeit* and went into a *Bratwurst* bar to eat. All large towns now look similar. During his travels Theodore noticed that the same logos from the same international companies blazed everywhere. In England, France or Hungary there are no longer *pubs*, *bistrots* or *kocsma*, only *Kneipe* world wide. He tried to imagine how London, Lyon or Budapest might have looked before the war. With difficulty.

Planning and Propaganda

Yes, it seems everything did indeed start after the second world war. The Himmler plan financed the reconstruction of the devastated countries. There was a lot of propaganda in it. Three ounces of propaganda for one ounce of flour. For every box of soap, a few drops of brainwash. The peace contract itself had been written in the new world language. German had become the language of diplomacy and business.

Theodore could not read any more; the music was rather loud inside the bar. To be fair the lyrics of the little song did not require too much brain work. It went something like “Ich liebe dich, mein Schatz”. Theodore started to long for songs with real lyrics and a message. Few songs not in German are heard on the radio. In fact more and more non-German groups sing in the fashionable language. In the Eurovision Song Contest originally only the Scandinavians did that. That was because their languages belong to the same family of languages. It was easy for them. Nowadays countries whose groups do not sing in German in the contest are at a very great disadvantage. The English, who had poor results in recent contests, and who now consider their language unsuitable for modern songs, decided that in future their group will sing in German.

Engleutsch

When selling CDs other countries can sell only to their local market, but German pop groups can sell across the whole world. Besides, as not everyone understands the lyrics, the groups do not need to pay much attention to the words. But they can invest their much more substantial income in higher quality sound.

The use of a national language as an international language has already affected other languages so much that several people (well some) speak about 'Engleutsch'. It is a mixed language, which is spoken in England, an English mixed with many German words and expressions. Similarly, 'Frallemant' has evolved in France. Twenty years after the war, a certain Etienne wrote a book in France "Do you speak Frerman?" which for some time had a small effect and pushed out some Germanisms, but after a while for every word repulsed ten new ones arrived in. It is not fashionable to resist this phenomenon. Try to say in French "Bonne fin de semaine!". You will be immediately corrected: "Bonne Wochenende!". As if both did not mean 'weekend'!

While he walked, Theodore passed a cinema. It was clear from the posters that seven out of ten films on show were German. In several countries they no longer even dub them, but simply add subtitles. Is this to save money or so that the ears of the natives may become accustomed to the language of the coloniser?

Channel Goebbels

Arriving home Theodore switched on the television. The major channels for worldwide viewing are German. Great influence is exerted by the universal German news channel, whose founders are followers of Goebbels. The channels from other countries display many German products and use many German expressions. Especially the English television channels. For example the news is no longer called *News* but *BBC Nachrichten*. England even created a German language channel called *The English Wave*. Theodore flicked across the channels. But there was only propaganda everywhere to dumb down the colonised.

He switched off the television and sat down at his computer. Here too German holds sway. It is the language of computing, as Latin in its day was the language of the Catholic church Computing was born in the Reich and first flourished there alongside the first big calculators. This is why they contain the code for writing every letter of the German alphabet, but not for the accented letters in other languages. German terms abound in Theodore's profession. The QWERTZ keyboard is used in every country. The programs like *Fenster* and *Kraftpunkt* are very popular.

Global Germanisation

But it is chiefly in business that the domination of the world language can be seen. Following a fashionable and prestigious phenomenon advertisements and names of businesses and firms, which contain German words, help to increase sales. In this

time of globalisation (or global Germanisation) the German language is becoming ever more the working language of companies irrespective of their geographical location. Firms in the USA, Britain and France use German during meetings, even when all the participants are American, British or French. Internal documents and regulations are issued only in that language.

This creates an internal dilemma for Theodore, because though he is very fond of German, he does not support a national language becoming the world language and destroying other languages and cultures.

The commercial dominance of the Reich and its language is growing stronger and stronger because of a vicious circle. The Reich is strong because it won the war. Its economic strength increases the use of German as the international language. And the wide scale use of the language gives an economic advantage to the Reich. Students who do not speak German must dedicate a lot of time every week to learning this 'universal' language (for at least five years). This is time during which Germans can study their own specialisms more fully. So especially in the sciences the latter weekly increase their lead when compared to the former.

Besides, Germans enjoy the great advantage of being able to publish in their own language and lecture in it in conferences. For this reason their publications are better and need less effort. Their lectures are more persuasive. Non-Germans, even those who have an excellent command of the language, will not be able to publish anything without getting a native German speaker to read it through. Studies show that during international meetings native German speakers account for 80% of the talking time. Even after long study of the language non-Germans speak less well than an ordinary German homeless person. During debates Germans can say whatever they wish, but the others can say only what they can express in German.

Language Tax

Nowadays, thought Theodore, an average professional, who has a good command of German, carries more value than an outstanding professional, who has only a moderate ability to express himself in that language. A German can go abroad and earn money teaching German. Even without mastering any specialism he can easily get a job. He will be very useful checking texts. Theodore was frightened by the thought that humanity was becoming divided into two strata. Those whose native tongue is the new 'lingua franca' belong to the upper stratum. They are the nobles in this new modern feudalism. The use and teaching of its language is a great source of wealth for the Reich and a cost in money and time for everyone else. In fact it is a kind of language tax.

The higher stratum of the other countries serve the Reich and its companies. They have the means to learn the language well. And send their children to bilingual schools or even to the Reich itself. Several even use German at home with their

children, so that these should have better opportunities afterwards in life. From their capability to deal with the members of the Reich they gain a tremendous advantage. For them this situation is excellent and because of that they stifle all efforts for a more equitable international language policy. In reality they collaborate with the coloniser and their own people for money. Theodore thought the most appropriate expression to attach to them was traitors to the fatherland and the 'mother' tongue.

Snobs

In the lower strata swarm snobs striving to imitate the top stratum. Often those who speak German less well use the most German words and expression. So they look cultured and fashionable. These snobs always make Theodore nervous. When he asks them why they do not use their own language's words instead of a fashionable German expression, they explain that the two do not have the same meaning, that there is a nuance, that there is no suitable word in their own language or something along similar lines...

If their ancestors had reasoned similarly in centuries past there would not be words in most languages for the most basic objects or matters. Theodore employs a humorous strategy against snobs, whose percentage of German words in one sentence is too high. He simply continues the conversation in German. It is always very amusing when the snobs have to excuse themselves and admit that they do not have a good command of German.

Everything relating to German culture is considered fashionable and prestigious, what relates to other cultures is considered backward and ordinary. In the victorious country propaganda and myths reign. Many want to emigrate to the centre of the world. One after another the best scientists leave their own countries to work in (and for) the Reich.

In the foundation document of the European Empire the equality of languages is underlined as an important matter. However other languages are used less and less. To save time and money. European institutions more and more frequently employ exclusively native speakers of German. So Austrians and German nationals have a great advantage. Nobody notices this will reduce other languages to second rank, weakening them along with their cultures. For some years already, in Theodore's school too, more and more choose German as their first foreign language. Very, very few learn other languages.

Blind Sheep

The more he considered this matter, the more Theodore moved to the conclusion that the European Empire stood at a historical parting of the roads. At first sight there are two possible ways ahead. The first – use several working languages – leads to respect for linguistic diversity and equality between languages. But it is a costly and

impractical route. Translation and interpretation between different languages requires money, time and energy. The second road runs in the direction of using German for international communications. The majority of sheep blindly follow this 'fashionable' direction unaware that it leads to the weakening of the rest of the languages and cultures. To global Germanisation. To voluntary colonisation. They do not see that travelling this road they will actually have to talk German to their own grandchildren. If people would look more closely (or were willing to look, or able to look), it would be evident that hidden behind the bushes of prejudice and mistaken opinions and the fog of false arguments there is a third road forward.

Everyone speaks it

Few are familiar with this third road. To maintain their own privileges some actually hide it, deny its existence or say it is a fanciful route which cannot be used. People mock it. Just as the deputy director of the firm visited today did. Few react against the cultural and linguistic imperialism of the 'Pax Germanica'. Possibly this is because few are aware of it? Theodore is impressed by the effect of the continual propaganda. Even people who speak no German at all claim in all seriousness that "Everyone speaks German". No one mentions that more than 90% of humanity do not speak it. And so of course German is THE language of business, computing, air and sea transport, and so on.

Yes, in fact the international language Esperanto truly seems to be unneeded.

Who is interested in a non-national easier language for international use?

In a language which puts communications between peoples on an equal and more effective footing?

In a language which is many times more quickly learned, not just by the elite?

In a language whose use could preserve the diversity of national languages and cultures?

Theodore made for bed deciding that he would possibly not mention his strange 'hobby' in an interview at the next firm. Because "Everyone speaks German" and "It is an easy language" and "The best one for international communication".