



Semantography Series No. 256

BLISS AND THE UNITED STATES
COMMUNICATION SATELLITE CORPORATION

Some articles and another futile approach for interlinguistic subtitles in global television transmissions.

On March 29, 1967 I wrote the following letter to the Communications Satellite Corporation

The General Manager
Communications Satellite Corp. (Comsat)
Washington D.C. U.S.A.

Sydney 29.3.67

Dear Sir,

First, let me congratulate you on the achievement of your corporation, the coming world-wide TV shows by the 3 of your stationary satellites. As a research man who worked in electronics (now retired) I can well appreciate your success, and I am looking forward to seeing your TV show in my TV set. Actually, I wanted to write to you since I read about Comsat and especially since the cover story in TIME May 14, 1965 showing pictures of your first transmission via your Early Bird. And this brings me to the purpose of my letter.

It will be easy to transmit some events and movies which are somehow self-explanatory. But soon you would have to add sub-titles to make the pictures understood. However, your viewers are speaking many different languages, and it is impossible to have more than 2 or 3 sub-titles in different languages, one below the other. I have seen movies in multilingual countries of Europe with up to 4 lines of sub-titles in 4 languages, and they have almost covered the whole picture leaving only the foreheads of the actors to be seen.

I was manager of the patent department of a large electronic firm and have realised the difficulties which different languages can create. I found that Esperanto is not the solution because people stick to their mother-tongues even in the United States and Canada where many still speak almost exclusively French, or German, or Ukrainian, or Norwegian, etc. though their forefathers came into the country centuries ago. I realised then that only symbols which can be read like $1 + 2 = 3$ in all languages offer a solution for the bridging of languages. I used extensively the pictorial symbols of electronics in wiring diagrams, and this gave me then the lead to work out a complete system of pictorial symbols (not more than about 100) which are so basic that they can be used in combination for all meaning needed in communication, commerce, industry, and even science. The second edition of my large work on Semantography is now available in the U.S.A. and on page 415 I have a chapter starting with the title "Sub-titles in the Jungle Cinema" where I show that my pictorial symbols are so simple that they can be used as subtitles to explain what happens on the screen. Educators who have made tests with children have found that children learn to read and write my symbols within an hour. And here is what I wrote in the introduction of the second edition:

"The first commercial satellite "Early Bird" has been launched, and two more will follow, providing television shows for the whole world. Subtitles will be needed, but in how many languages? Bliss proposes 5 minutes TV lessons with animated Disney figures dissolving into the pictorial symbols. This will teach all viewers to read any subtitle in their own languages, and to pick up the corresponding words in the English subtitles."

Now, Sir, having read so far, you may think the whole idea is a crazy one. In this case you may stop reading here and discard my letter into the dustbin. But if you care to read the first 4 pages of my book (attached to this letter) you will realise that great scholars have praised my work and that the Australian Government has recommended it to the United Nations.

Should you be interested in the idea, please be informed that I hold copyrights for practically the whole world on these pictorial symbols, covering also all derivations, deviations and imitations. This would give you a monopoly, and if you make some tests with my symbols and then use them tentatively and experimentally as subtitles for some transmissions you would then be able to exercise a monopoly on this kind of transmission.

I have deliberately not included a page with samples of my pictorial symbols. I found that it is a waste with people who think the whole idea crazy enough

not to give it a second thought. But I shall be delighted to find that you do not belong to these people, and that you can recognise a new idea when you see one.

In this case let me say that I am not out to make money for my work. All I want is that it be used by humanity, and that it should be accepted by all people of this planet as a new medium for common understanding, a new unheard-of

"One Writing for one World"

All I want is that you should publish a small booklet showing my basic symbols and saying in a number of languages what they mean, and how they can be combined to be used for whole sentences in sub-titles. I assure you, children and adults who have come to learn my symbols are "thrilled and fascinated" by them as educators have reported. Such a little booklet would also be the best propaganda material for your world-wide shows.

So, dear Sir, think about my proposal and let me know. I am,
Yours sincerely,
C.K. Bliss, B.Sc.

I received the following answer

Dear Mr. Bliss,

April 5, 1967.

Your letter of March 29, 1967 dealing with "One Writing for One World" has been referred to me for answer. The Communications Satellite Corporation is, of course, interested in considering ideas submitted to it from outside sources. Such ideas are usually technically oriented ones, but we recognise that there are some non-technical ideas which could conceivably be of interest and benefit to us.

The law surrounding the consideration of submitted ideas, however, makes it essential for the Corporation first to receive a written agreement from the individual submitting the idea, pursuant to which that individual agrees to certain conditions. Those conditions, which ^{are} set forth in the following paragraph, avoid the possibility of the Corporation's being liable in case it is already working on the idea, or in case that idea has already been submitted to the Corporation from another source.

In consideration of the Corporation's undertaking to consider and evaluate your idea, will you please acknowledge and affirm the following conditions and understandings: that your submission of the idea is not made on the basis of a confidential disclosure: that Communications Satellite Corporation assumes no obligation, express or implied, to pay you any compensation for the submitted idea by receiving and considering it: that all rights and remedies arising out of the consideration or use of the idea by Communications Satellite Corporation shall be limited to the rights and remedies now or hereinafter granted by patent and copyright laws or statutes: and further, that the presentation of the idea to Communications Satellite Corporation does not prejudice any rights which we may have to the subject matter growing out of our own prior independent work or from the fact that the subject matter of the idea may already be in the public domain.

If you wish us to consider your proposal, please indicate your acceptance of the above conditions by signing the enclosed copy of this letter in the space indicated below. We will then transmit the idea to any interested elements of the Corporation and be in touch with you shortly thereafter.

Thank you for your interest in the Communications Satellite Corporation.

Very Truly Yours,
Milton C. Nomkin

I then wrote

Dear Mr. Nomkin,

Sydney 17.4.67

I have received your letter of April 5. I am very familiar with such forms as I was chief of the patent department of a large firm. I understand therefore fully the position and return herewith your letter duly signed.

Having now received your communication indicating to me that you are willing to study my work I have no hesitation to send you a sample tourist folder, showing how I combine 30 internationally used symbols and 29 of my pictorial symbols to hundreds of meanings needed in international travel and communication. This folder will give you the proof that my work can do for you what you need: namely sub-titles which can be read in all languages by the people who would view your world-wide TV transmission via your satellites.

Of course, my symbols need a little learning, but tests have proved that even children learn them quickly and can read new combinations they haven't seen before. My idea is to ask the Walt Disney Company to make 5 minutes animated films showing first the drawing of a man, and then how this picture dissolves until it turns into my symbol for man thus $\wedge$. The same can be done with all my other symbols as shown in the travel folder. Thus, short 5 minute lessons would be given via your satellite and then complete sentences as for instance man speaks $\wedge$ o (the outline of the mouth) and also a speaker $\wedge$ p. Thus I can form any needed sentence. It would surely be a most novel idea and would enhance interest in your world-wide TV shows, and all papers would bring interesting articles showing how you use this new idea.

"One Writing for One World"

As for me, I am now 70. All I want is to initiate this idea into practical reality before I die. Your kind help will help me to achieve this, and I close my letter in this hope and thank you for your kind interest.

Yours sincerely,

P.S. As you can see from page 8 of the travel folder my book is available from the wholesaler

C.K. Bliss, B.Sc.

ACME CODE COMPANY INC.

102 First Street

Hackensack N.J. 07601, U.S.A.

Retail price is \$12.00 but if you send the order through your library, you would get the 25% reduction making it only \$9.00. However, at present you don't need the book as the folder will give you insight into my symbols. In order to use up all air mail weight I enclose one more paper No. 303.

The articles to which I referred in my first letter appeared on the following dates in the following papers. These articles are preserved in my collection in the National Library of Australia.

Sydney Morning Herald 3rd May, 1965 titled

"Papal Blessing for Early Bird"

Time Magazine May 14, 1965 titled

"The Room-size World."

This article shows 5 television pictures with the following sub-titles

DR. MICHAEL ELLIS DeBAKEY

PORTSMOUTH ENGLAND

ROMA

RAN OF KUTCH

MEXICO CITY

But there is no hint of the meaning of the pictures, except the picture of the Pope standing on a balcony. All other^s are meaningless except for those who read the topics in the newspapers.

Time Magazine May 28, 1965

An advertisement of the Hughes Aircraft Company which was instrumental in building the first satellites. The title of the ad runs

"On April 9, Early Bird was "parked" above the Earth - and your life was made richer."

Time Magazine June 25, 1965 titled

"Quarrels over Comsat"

Sydney Morning Herald April 29, 1967

"The World is his Studio" and the sub-title "Harry Robinson meets the man behind the first Global TV program."

Needless to say that I received no answer from Mr. Nomkin or anyone else of the Corporation. Another futile approach ended.

The End.