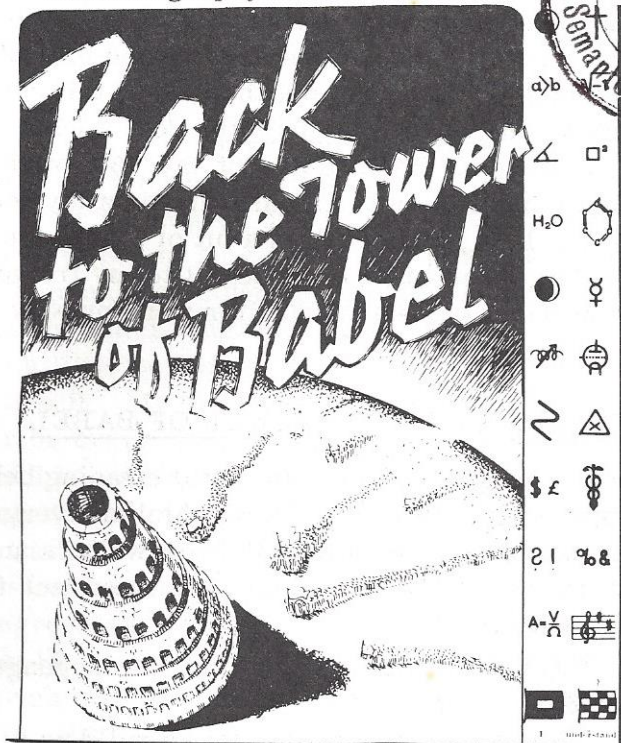




An Idea of a Picture Book on
Linguistics *by C.K. Bliss*

This idea came to me in Shanghai in 1945. The war had come to an end, and a new hope for a new life came up - and the enthusiastic support I received from the Chinese, Europeans and Americans in Shanghai for my idea of a modern symbol writing - all this made me and Claire hope that the world will greet my work with great acclaim, provided I propose my work properly. Hence the idea of an illustrated booklet on the Babel of Languages as an introduction.

I commissioned one of my artist friends among the refugee community to draw the following pictures. Alas, I have forgotten his name and therefore cannot give him the proper credit. But his pictures tell the story well. (please turn over)

2 But when we arrived in Australia we found to our dismay that Western scholars scorned the idea of a modern symbol writing. I put the idea of this picture book aside, and concentrated on the real work. Now 27 years later, on the occasion of my 75th birthday, and exactly 30 years after I had started on my work in Shanghai in 1942, I have added a bit of text to the pictures and am presenting this booklet to my friends as a Present with my Best Wishes for a Happy New Year

THE STORY OF THE TOWER OF BABEL

Have you ever realised the true meaning behind this Bible story, the idea of a wrathful and vengeful Jehovah as pictured by the old Hebrew writers and the following translators? Here is an extract from Genesis, Chapter 11:

"And the whole earth was of one language and of one speech."

"And they said: 'Go to, let us build us a city and a tower whose top may reach unto heaven, and let us make us a name.'"

"And the Lord said: 'Behold the people is one and they have all one language, and this they begin to do; and now nothing will be restrained from them which they have imagined to do.'"

"Let us go down and there confound their language that they may not understand one another's speech."

Let us realise that the people had no evil intent. On the contrary. They enjoyed the understanding and co-operation given to them by one common language, and they intended to build a great city and a great tower for the generations to come "to make us a name." But Jehovah didn't like it, and he destroyed their tool for understanding and co-operation: one language for all.

I WAS BORN IN BABEL

I was born in the Babel of Old Austria where 20 nationalities hated each other because they spoke and thought in different languages. My parents spoke to me in German, the language of culture, and I refused to learn the other languages spoken in our town.

As a little boy of 4 I had to learn Hebrew and I didn't like it. My teacher used a big stick to poke me in the ribs every time I made a mistake. It hurt like hell and I hated languages.

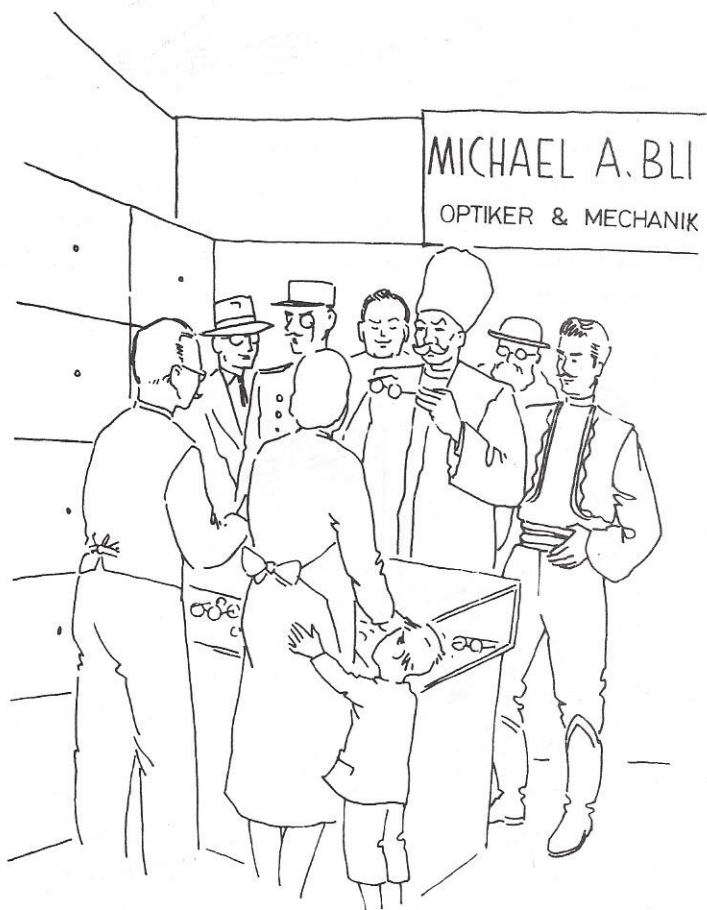
Later I had to pray in Hebrew in the synagogue. There was a frightening prayer during the high religious festivals when the priests, the Cohanim, blessed the congregation by making a magic sign with their hands holding high, and crying out in a fearful singsong to Jehovah to have mercy. I was told that I must bow low with all the others, and I must not look up, because if I see the magic sign, God will strike me dead instantly. Well, I plucked up enough boyish courage - and looked up and saw the magic sign.

I didn't die, and from then on I began to doubt everything taught to me as truth, even the theories of my physics and chemistry teachers, and of course the theories of my language teachers who forced on me the idiocies of their grammar. A thought came up in my boyish mind that one day I may invent something which could help mankind break that dreadful curse of the Tower of Babel.

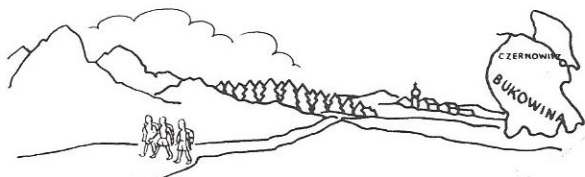
Since then I have written books and brochures and papers on linguistics and on my Semantography, and in the following pages I present the pictures and a few lines of text to each.



The first word I learned as a baby is an international word learned by all babies in all languages. This word is produced by munching mmmmmmamamamam the sweet milk from Mama's breasts.



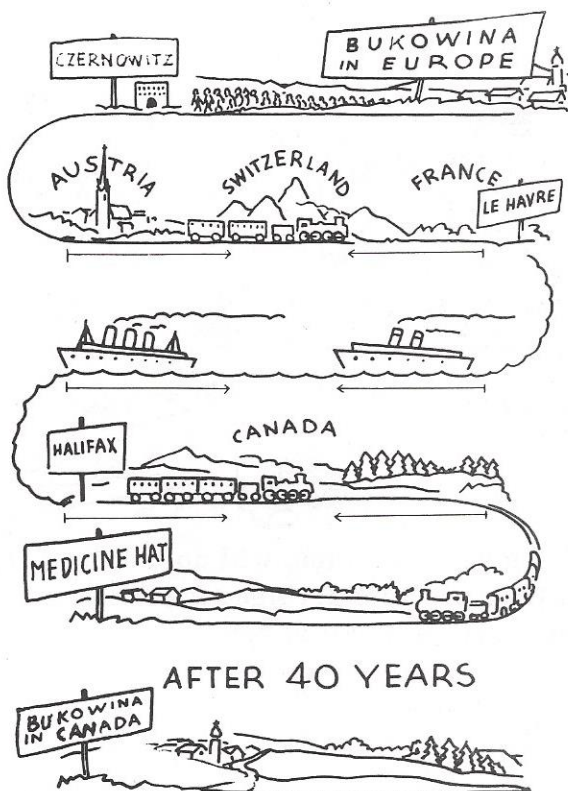
My Papa and my Mama had to speak in 6 different languages to their customers. I refused to learn these languages, but my two younger brothers Isidor and Heinrich, who took over the workshop after the death of our father, they learned them, because they had to.



I was born in 1897 in Czernowitz, the capital of the Easternmost province Bukowina of the old Austrian Empire. At a very early age I hiked with my brothers and friends through the beautiful Bukowina. It was like hiking across Europe, because



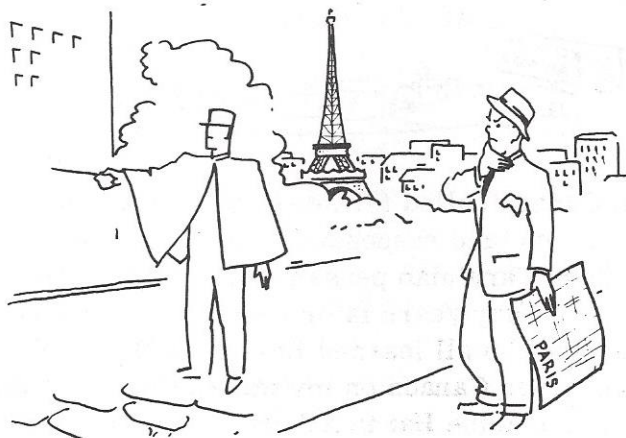
...because when the Empress Maria Theresia acquired the territory from the Turks in 1775 it was a wilderness of virgin forests. She called for settlers and they came from all over Europe, from Germany, Russia, Hungary, Poland, Ukraina, Roumania etc. and they brought their languages with them. They built German villages like Liechtental, Russian villages like Biela Kernitza, Ukrainian villages like Horodenka, Hungarian villages like Hadikfalva, Roumanian villages like Gurahumora, and even Jewish villages like Sadagora. And they all went on speaking their different mother tongues though German was the language of the authorities, and the language taught in all schools.



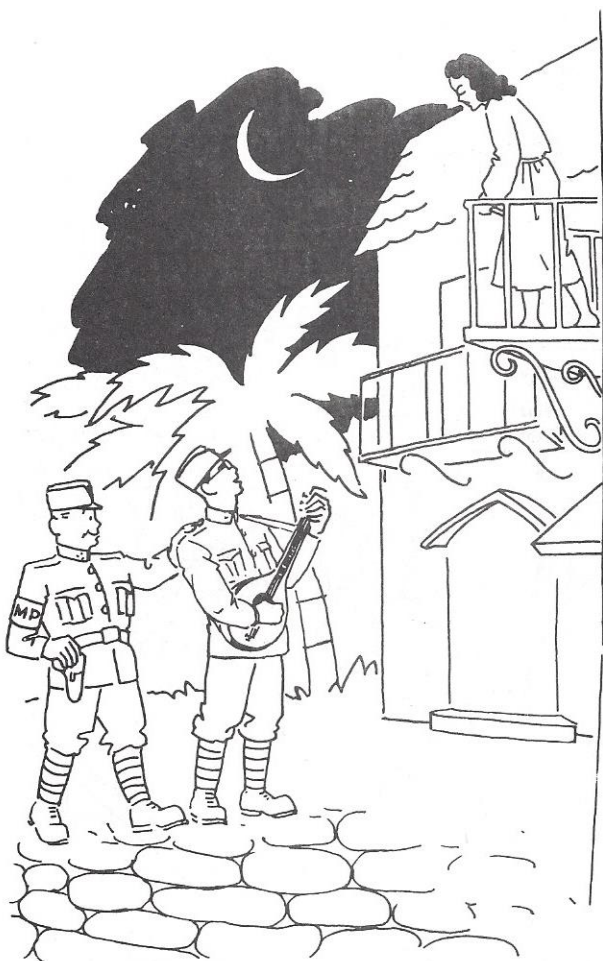
Then Canada called for settlers, and poor Ukrainians who had no land responded. As a little boy I watched those Ukrainian peasants boarding the trains for Canada. Forty years later I met some of their grandchildren who all learned English in their schools. In 1940 I crossed Canada on my way to China. I left the train in Medicine Hat in Alberta. It was a beautiful Sunday morning. I went to the market place where a lot of happy teenagers chatted laughingly - to my amazement - in Ukrainian. They learned Ukrainian from their mothers and grandmothers. I then realised the immense strength of the mother tongue.



I realised why Esperanto will not succeed, because people don't like to learn foreign languages and Esperanto is a foreign language to all of us.



In Paris I felt helpless - though I had learned French in school for seven years. What was wrong with my school learning? I believed that it's all my fault, and that I have no gift for foreign languages. But then in Italy.....



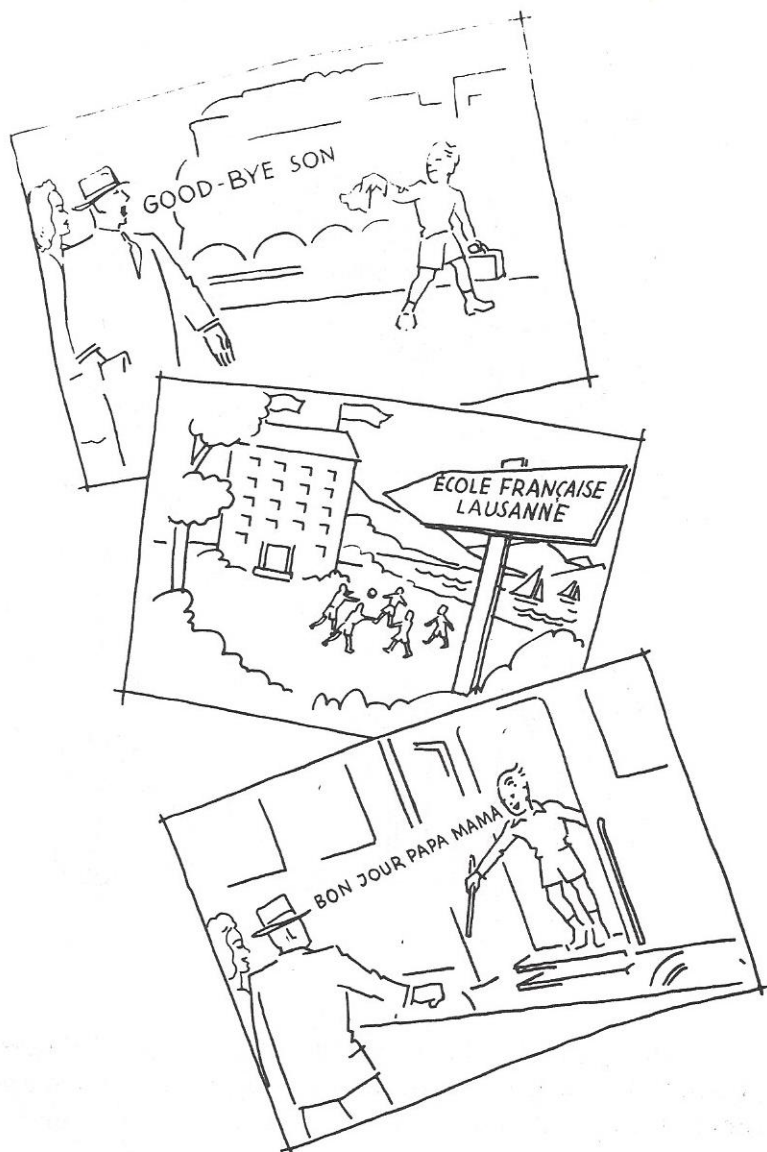
I came to Italy as a soldier in the first World War - and without knowing any grammar, I learned to speak Italian within 3 months. So, it could not be my fault. Whose fault is it then which accounts for the utter failure of language learning in the schools of the world?



The fault is with our language teachers. They pester us with grammatical constructions and with the endless idiocies and irregularities of languages. And to think that mankind gets along fairly well without any grammar learning, and that most of us would fail miserably today in a grammar examination. But is there a better way to learn a foreign language?



I conceived the idea of small "Language Villages" populated by people from foreign lands. Teachers and their children would go there for a whole day every week, would learn to speak with the people there, would read their papers and their books. It might work.



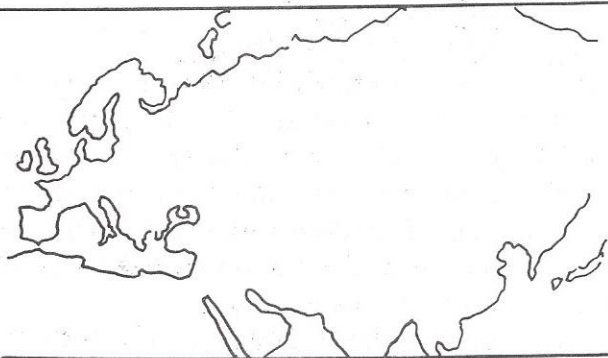
Then I realised why well-to-do parents are sending their children to schools in foreign countries. They come back well versed in the foreign language.



But perhaps there is a way to teach children Esperanto, or Interlingua, or Interglossa, or any other of the many artificially constructed international languages. Perhaps in a kind of Shanghri-La, but then if there are two children there who speak the same language, they will stick together and stick to their mother tongue. But perhaps there is still another and better way for common understanding.



In the Middle Ages the scholars taught and wrote in Latin. But their students preferred their mother tongues. They would drink and sing a few songs in Latin - but not more. Latin became a language for torturing students.



However, medical men all over the world use Latin terms, but they speak and correspond in their own language only. And few learn to master a foreign language well - unless they settle in a foreign country and learn its language.



From my good father I have interited the love to tell jokes well, and especially Jewish jokes by which Jews laugh about their own weaknesses. And one such joke made a deep impression on me, because it dealt with the learning of foreign languages. The story is told about three famous Jews who were debating which language is the most beautiful one.

Franz Werfel, who had translated Italian opera texts into German said: "The most beautiful language is Italian. Every word is pure music."

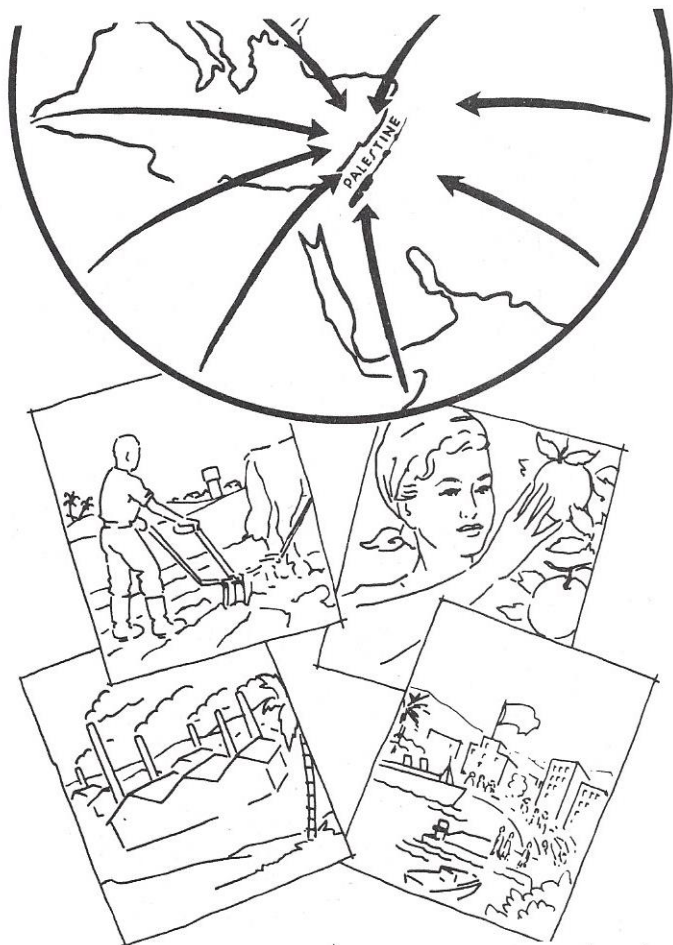
Egon Erwin Kish, who had spent years in Russia, disagreed: "The most beautiful language is Russian. Every word flows majestically like the Volga."

Shulem Alechem, the Yiddish writer, whose stories have been brought to the stage in "Fiddler on the Roof" said: "My dear Friends, the most beautiful language is Yiddish."

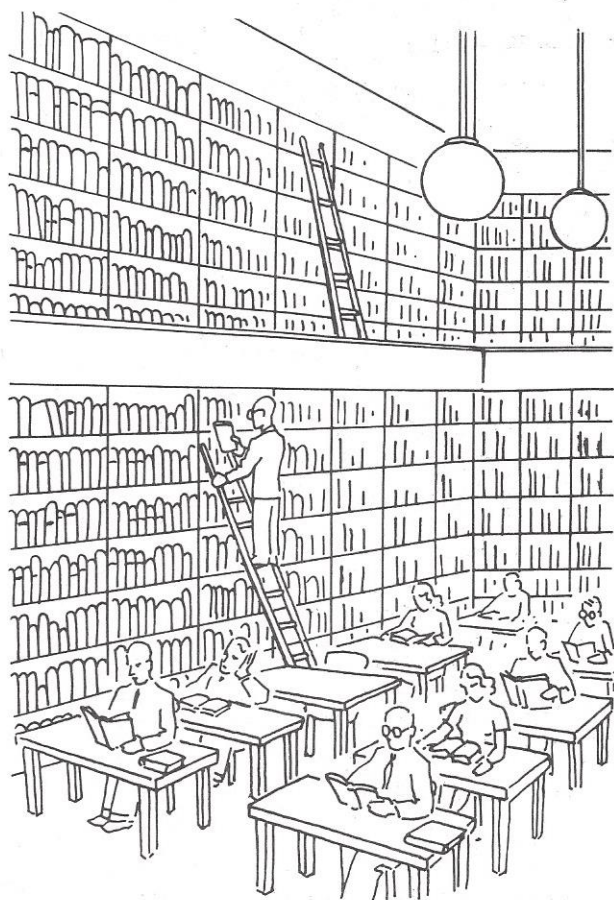
"Why?" cried the others in dismay. They understood Yiddish of course, but it was considered a jargon only, not a proper language.

"Why?" answered Schulem Alechem, "because we can understand every word!"

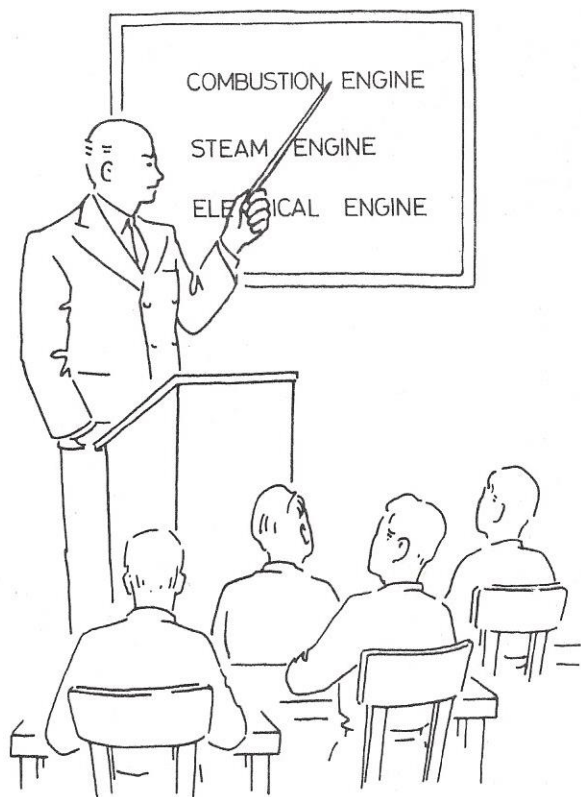
(I told my artist to picture a mother saying this, because I wanted to emphasize the strength of the "mother tongue")



And yet, a miracle has happened in Palestine. Persecuted Jews from many countries, and speaking many languages decided to build new cities and new beautiful towers - by reversing the curse of Jehovah at the tower of Babel. They made Hebrew a living language, and by doing this, they made the desert bloom, and the land bring forth fruits and food for all, and they built wonderful cities with schools, and universities and a democracy for Jews and even for Arabs within the State of Israel, giving them all a prosperity and welfare unheard of in the surrounding Arab countries.



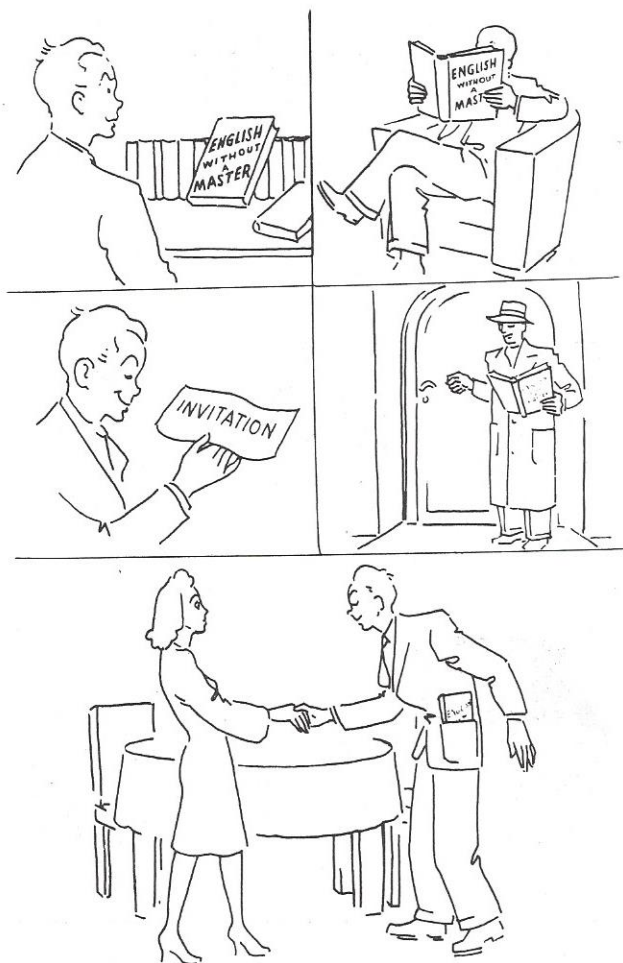
I was in Vienna chief of the patent department of a large firm and had to study scientific publications in too many languages. I realised that here too the curse of Jehovah is a great handicap for students, scholars and researchers. There are over 35,000 scientific journals printed in many languages. Research is often wastefully duplicated. No university has the money to subscribe to all publications, and to have them properly translated. Here I thought is a worthwhile field for a new idea to bridge all languages.



Already as a boy I realised the fallacy of teaching
by the word against....



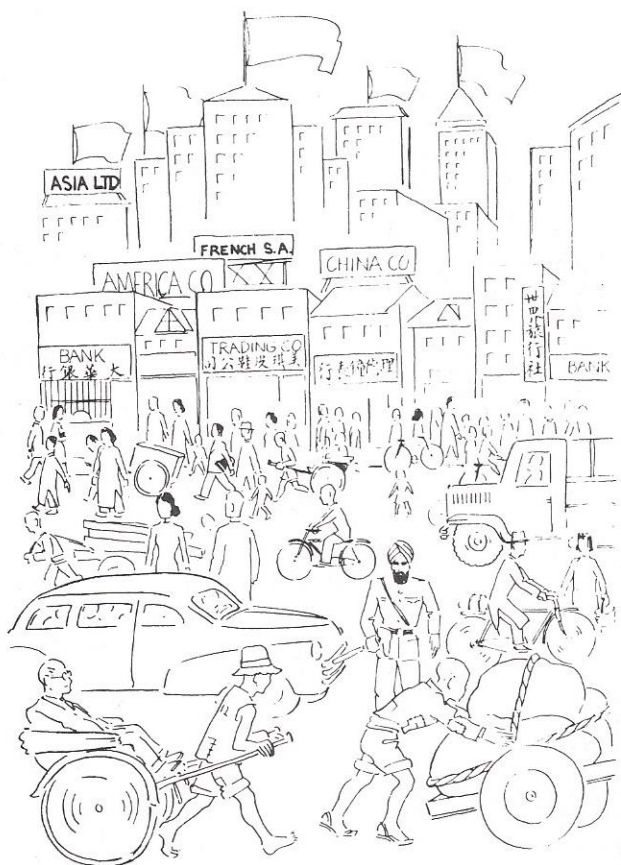
...against teaching by the handling of the real things, or pictures of the real things.



When I was released from the concentration camp and had to leave immediately for England I found there over 75,000 refugees all battling with English by studying books. Hundreds of jokes came up about all our mistakes and difficulties. This page illustrates one such joke. A refugee had studied carefully what to say when being invited into an English home. And when it happened he greeted the lady of the house with the words: "Good evening, ladies and gentlemen as the case may be."

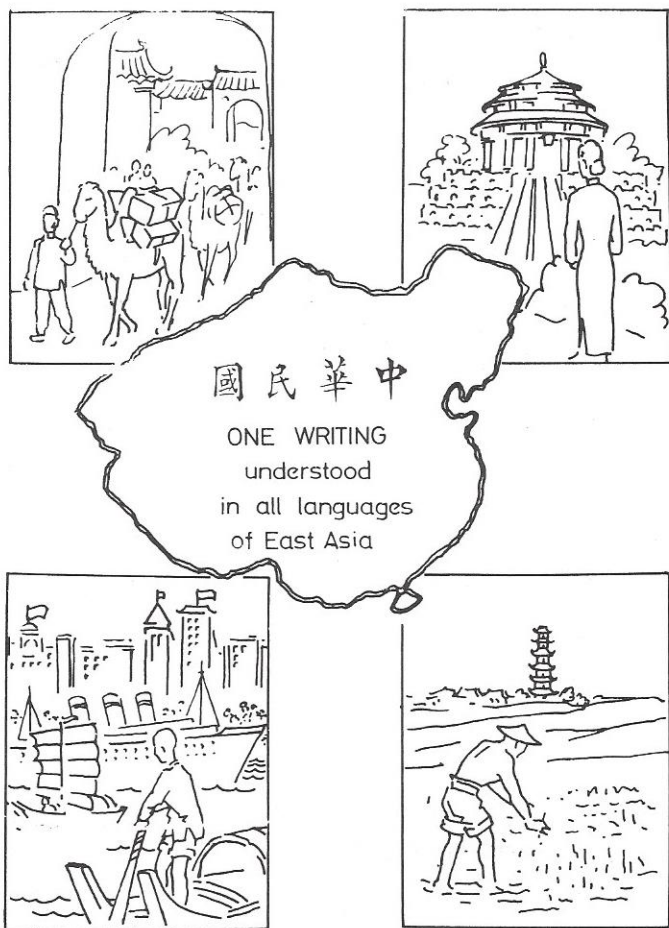


I learned English quickly by disregarding books and dictionaries. Instead I talked - no matter how atrociously - with the landlady, with the newsagent, with people in the bus, with my foreman in the factory where I was manager, with people on the phone and with my secretary. She was my best language teacher and corrected with infinite patience all my mistakes. In gratitude I took her to the cinema, to dinner, all the while chatting away in English, until I said "Good bye" to her.



The moment I arrived in England in May 1939 I applied immediately for an entry permit for Claire still in Vienna. But the war broke out. Fearing for her safety in Germany I left England and went to Shanghai, China via Canada, and did not rest until she joined me there coming via Russia and Siberia. On Xmas Eve 1940 we fell into each others arms after 3 years of terrible separation.

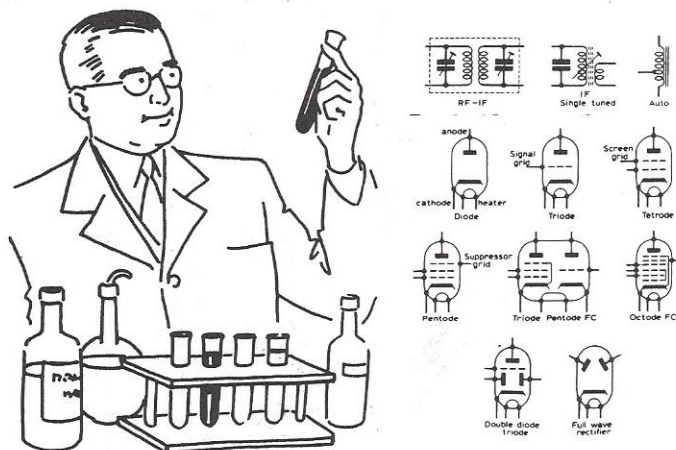
Shanghai was a roaring cosmopolitan city - and what fascinated me most was - what Lin Yutang called "The Second Great Wall of China", it's picto-ideographic writing. I scaled the wall and looked into a wonderland where people of different languages could read the same letter, book and newspaper.



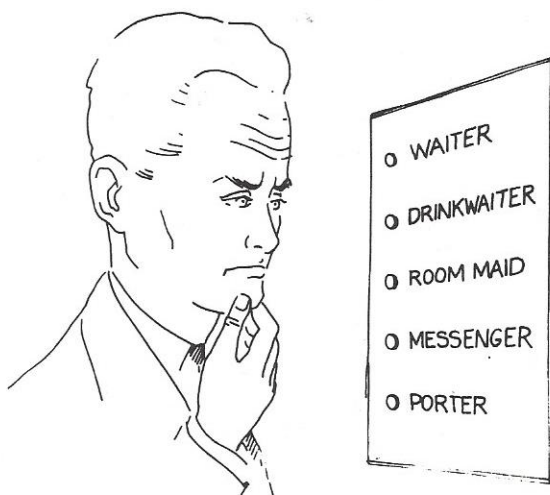
Chinese scholars told me that the main unifying factor that welded many tribes and invaders into the largest nation on earth was this universal script. They said that a European Nation would have been a reality many centuries ago, if Englishmen and Estonians, Frenchmen and Finns, Greeks and Germans, Romans and Russians, etc. had such a script which they could read in all their languages.



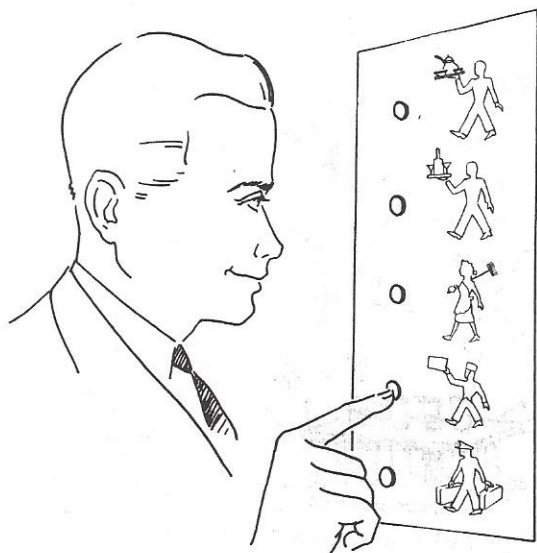
And then I remembered my boyhood days and my love of chemistry. It was a revelation to learn that H_2O means water in all languages. And that $1 + 2 = 3$ can be read in all mothertongues of mankind - without translation.



Then I became a research chemist in a factory making electronic equipment. I was fascinated by the pictorial symbols of electronics. I realised that radio technicians could read them in all their languages.



Then I remembered my difficulties in the hotels of foreign countries.



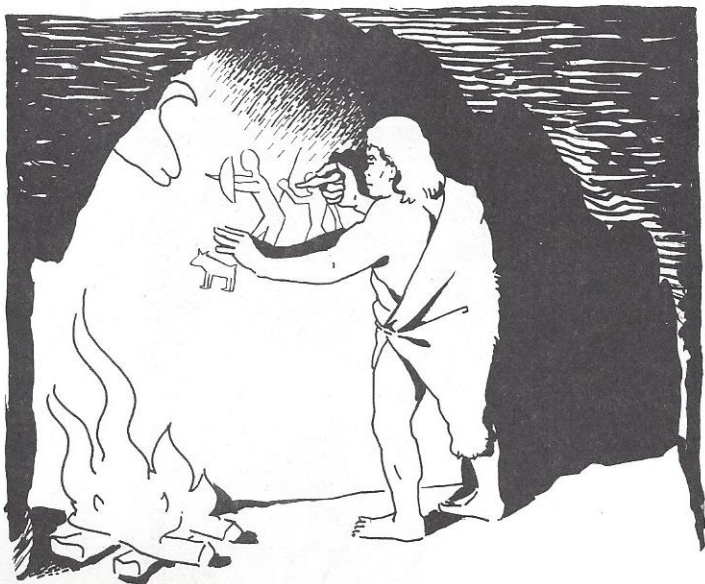
And my delight when I found pictures instead of words in a small hotel.



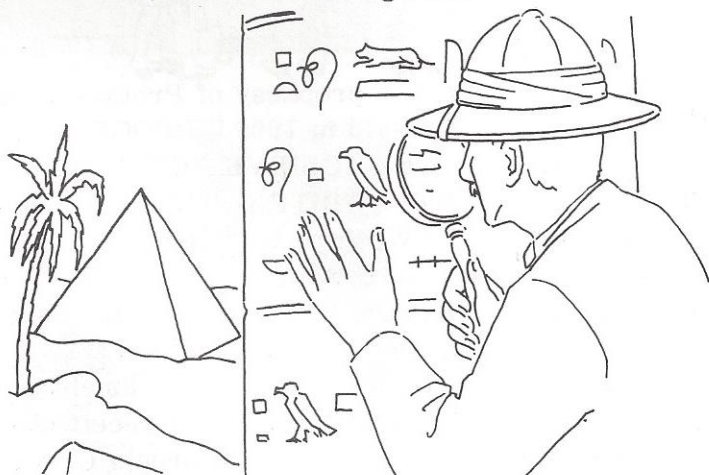
Today a foreigner is helpless in a bank displaying words he cannot understand.



I began to design pictorial symbols for banks, (see above) because I had already learned the Chinese symbols in the banks of Shanghai. But these Chinese symbols are complicated. I set myself the task to develop a modern simple and logical symbol writing.

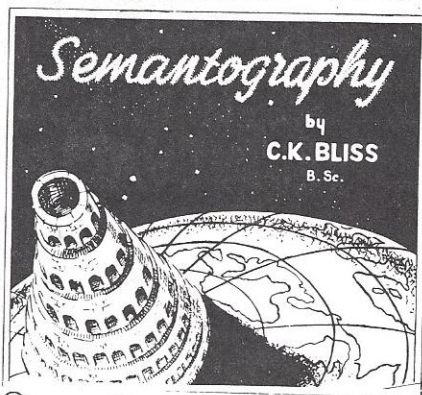


I began to study the history of writing - from the cave paintings of old stone age man -



to the hieroglyphics of Old Egypt, to the cuneiforms of the Sumerians, the alphabet of the Hebrews, the Greeks and the Romans, but also the picture writings of the Indians, the Eskimos, and other primitive people - and above all the sophisticated (but complicated) Chinese picto-ideography.

100 SYMBOL ELEMENTS TO OVERCOME BABEL



I was heartened by a prophesy of Professor Basil Hall Chamberlain who said in 1905 "IDEOGRAPHIC WRITING WILL SURELY ACHIEVE THE FINAL VICTORY OVER PHONETIC WRITING." But I found that Western scholars and Western laymen considered me a crank, and my Semantography a "crazy idea." Claire wrote thousands of letters to professors and educators. Few only understood and acclaimed my work. Claire died heartbroken in 1961. I continued in lonely despair - until the miracle happened in 1971. I received a letter from the Ontario Crippled Children's Centre in Toronto, Canada, informing me that mute helpless cerebral palsied children who cannot learn the alphabet have taken with enthusiasm to my symbols and have learned to communicate at last with their parents and with the outside world. I flew to Canada to witness the miracle.



Claire vindicated.



CEREBRAL PALSY VICTIMS LEARNING TO "SPEAK" WITH PRINTED SYMBOLS

This picture
appeared in
TIME June 26,
1972.

This picture appeared in the Toronto "Globe and Mail" showing me with an electric symbol table developed by the Communication Team of the Ontario Crippled Children's Centre. Other newspapers and magazines brought the good news that my "crazy idea" has succeeded at last. Claire's unwavering faith in the goodness of my work has won.

BUT SEMANTOGRAPHY CANNOT BE SPOKEN

That's the beauty of it. That will ensure its acceptance. People don't need to learn strange words of a strange language. They can go on babbling in their mothertongues.

Moreover my symbols will lead to an international spoken language, a language already the mother tongue of hundreds of millions of people, a language already the international language in communication, commerce, industry and science, a language which high school boys and girls of all countries learn - English.

Children who will learn my logical symbols will find them conforming to English.

However, one task remains for us to do. We must force our teachers and professors of English to remove gradually all illogical idiocies in English spelling, pronunciation and grammar which make English such a difficult language to learn by foreigners.

George Bernard Shaw said that only a civil war or a revolution against our jungle keepers of language will bring about a single logical English for all of mankind to learn and to use.

When this comes about, the curse of Jehovah will be removed from us, and we will be back at the Tower of Babel before the confusion of language, and then - according to the Bible words of a mankind with a common language and a common speech:

"nothing will be restrained from them which they have imagined to do".

We will build happy cities and towers for a happy humanity because the main cause of hatred and of war will have been removed.