

**ON
LANGUAGE
PROBLEM**

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Publisher's Note

This is just a reprint of an article published as far back as April, 1965, in *Socialist Unity*, the then English organ of our Party, under the title *On the question of official language of India*. It may be recalled that when the Government of India made Hindi the official language in place of English, a very powerful movement developed against this decision in different parts of the country and pressurised by it the central government stepped back to an extent and declared that English would continue as an associate official language along with Hindi as long as the non-Hindi speaking people would consider such use necessary.

In this backdrop this article brilliantly dealt with the language problem in India taking into consideration its various aspects and clearly laid down what should be the scientific approach to solve such a complicated question confronting the life of the people.

This penetrating article, prepared under the direct supervision of Comrade Shibdas Ghosh, the great leader of the proletariat, an outstanding Marxist thinker and philosopher of the era and the Founder General Secretary of the Party, at that time caused a great stir in the minds of the people and left a deep impression amongst the intellectuals of our country. It is our firm belief that it will do the same even today.

At present when the BJP government at the Centre is out to undo the present status of English as the official language of India this article by Comrade Shibdas Ghosh will go a long way in powerfully confronting this attack of the central BJP Government.

With this purpose in view this article is reprinted.

with greetings,

Amitava Chatterjee

September, 2022
48 Lenin Sarani,
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ON LANGUAGE PROBLEM

The Government of India, in pursuance of Article 343 of the Constitution of India and the provisions of the Official Languages Act, has made Hindi the official language of India with effect from the 26th January this year (1965). It cannot be denied that substantial section of our people is strongly opposed to this move by the Government. The opposition has clearly expressed itself in the country-wide movement, especially the recent movement in Madras (now Tamil Nadu), over the question of official language. In the face of the mounting and stiff resistance by the people, the Government has been forced to slightly modify its previous stand and declare that English will continue to be used in the non- Hindi speaking states for as long as the people there will consider such use necessary. This so-called formula of bilingualism is nothing but a trap to pacify the movement, sidetrack the real issue and, at the same time carry on the Government measures to ultimately replace English by Hindi. Those, who do not object to the ultimate replacement of English by Hindi but are only opposed to forcible imposition, meaning by implication thereby that they are in favour of imposing Hindi by subtle and surreptitious means, ought to have been satisfied by the formula of bilingualism. But even they, in view of the intensity of feeling of the non-Hindi

speaking people and the tempo of the movement, have come out with statements vaguely condemning the language policy of the Government and demanding legal guarantee of the assurance of the continued use of English as an associate official language in non-Hindi speaking states for an indefinite period. In fact, between these persons and the Government there is no difference on the language policy except on the question as to whether or not the Government assurance will have a legally binding effect. It is true that there is some ground for genuine apprehension that after the withdrawal of the movement, the Government may conveniently forget its assurance and refuse to allow the continued use of English (such things happened in the past) and, hence, there is the necessity of giving the assurance a legally binding character by suitably amending the Constitution and the Official Languages Act. Yet after the open assurance by the Government to continue English side by side with Hindi for an indefinite period, there is no valid and sufficient ground for continuing the movement except, perhaps, the desire to exploit the sentiment of the non-Hindi-speaking people for petty sectarian interests. The so-called formula of bilingualism cannot, of course, satisfy those, who firmly believe that the changeover to Hindi, whether immediate or in future, forcible or peaceful, by itself, is a retrograde step hostile to popular cause.

The recent happenings in the non-Hindi speaking states all over the country prove once again how foolish it has been at this stage to arbitrarily make, by a stroke of pen, one of the various national languages, namely Hindi, the sole official language in a multinationality

multilingual country like ours. Considering the tremendous discontent of our people, it will be extremely unwise to belittle the importance of the language question and be guided by the bad logic that since the question has been decided by the Constitutional provision, it will not be proper to reopen it. On the contrary, political wisdom demands the reopening of the question afresh for country-wide discussion in order to solve the language problem scientifically and cement the damaged popular unity in our country. And for that purpose a thorough and unbiased discussion of the language question, at least in its major aspects, is essentially necessary.

We expressed our considered views on the question in an earlier issue of the *Socialist Unity* (June, 1963, issue). In the prevailing confusion over the language question, we consider it our duty to reiterate our say to help our people to grasp the real issues and move correctly.

Before we enter into the main question, we like to make it clear that the question of an official language of India and the question of the emergence of one single all national language in a multi-nationality, multi-lingual country like ours are not the same though many a so-called pundit is confusing the one with the other. In our considered view, the problems associated with the language question in our country are as follows. What should be the official language or the link language. What should be the medium of instruction ? What should be the official language for intra-state work? And what is the process of the emergence of one single national language in a multi-nationality, multi-lingual

country like India ?

Some Arguments against English Re-examined

Now what for English is being replaced by Hindi as India's official language? The argument, which the supporters of this changeover advance, is that every national state must have a single language as its official language for national integration and that Hindi being the mother-tongue of 40 percent of India's total population, it has the highest claim for being accepted as the official language of India. This assumption is not factually true nor it has any bearing in deciding the issues involved in the present discussion. There are numbers of national states, which have more than one official language. For example, Canada has two official languages, English and French. Switzerland has as many as four official languages. In Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union all the languages of all the nationalities are the official languages. Hence, it is not true that every national state must have a single language as its official language. Then again these supporters of the Government policy of making Hindi the official language of India are, in effect, considering as to how to make Hindi the single all-national language for the whole of India, though they are speaking of making it the official language. Because, otherwise the argument of achieving national integration through the use of Hindi would not have been advanced. Thus, by declaring Hindi as the official language of India, the Government is trying to put the thin end of the wedge in order to make Hindi the single national language for the whole of India.

Even if it is assumed for the sake of argument,

though factually such assumption is incorrect, that every national state must have a *single* language as its official language, what harm is here in keeping English as that official language? The spokesmen of the Government oppose the retention of English as the official language of India mainly on two grounds. Their first argument is that as English is a foreign language, it cannot be the official language of India. Their second argument is that English being a foreign language, its continued use as the official language is against the interest of our national independence and sovereignty. There is another section, who puts forward a third set of logic. They argue that the retention of English as India's official language is a drive by the vested interests to keep politics and higher thoughts confined among a handful of people capable of having English education in our country. In our considered view these arguments have no leg to stand upon ; nevertheless let us examine them one by one on the anvil of scientific analysis.

About the first argument. In what way can we call English a foreign language except in reference to its place of origin ? But the place of origin of a given language cannot be the absolute ground for deciding if that language is a foreign language or not in respect of a given country. We all know that the place of origin of English is not the USA. Should the Americans then consider English a foreign language on the ground that it originated outside the USA? Only a fool can so think. As already stated, in Canada both English and French are in use as official languages. None of these two languages has its origin in Canada ; still no Canadian can ever dream of characterizing any one of them as a foreign language. The official language in most of the Latin American countries is Spanish whose place of origin is Spain, but the peoples of these countries never take Spanish as a foreign language. Are the

peoples of all these countries wrong in not considering these languages born on an alien soil foreign ? No, they are not. To determine if any language is to be considered a foreign language or not with regard to a given country, two factors are to be taken into account— (1) if that language is the spoken language or mother-tongue of any community of people permanently inhabiting the territory of the given country and (2) if that language is the vehicle of higher thought of any such community of people. Any language satisfying these two factors cannot be called a foreign language, no matter where its place of origin is. As English, French and Spanish fulfil these two conditions in the above mentioned respective countries, they are not considered foreign languages there. In our country also English fully satisfies these two factors. It is the spoken language, the mother tongue, of the persons belonging to the Anglo-Indian community, who are as much Indian as any other person belonging to any other community. It has, also, been serving successfully as the medium of communication of higher thought and culture in our country since its introduction here. So, English cannot, reasonably, be called a foreign language. It is one of the national languages in India like Assamese, Bengali, Hindi, etc. Besides, no one can deny that in spite of our desire and efforts we have not yet been able to abandon English and take our respective mother-tongues as the medium of instruction in the sphere of higher education and higher thought. Can a language, which is so inseparably linked up with our life and intimately nurturing our culture, be branded as a foreign language ? Let the zealots of the “Angraji Hatao” (drive away English) slogan kindly

ponder a bit over this question,

Now let us take the second argument for critical examination. Even if it is assumed for the sake of argument only that English is a foreign language in so far as India is concerned (this assumption is obviously wrong) how can its continued use as the official language undermine the national independence and sovereignty of India ? Has the use of English in the USA or of English and French in Canada or of Spanish in the Latin American countries as the official language or languages undermined in any way the national independence and sovereignty of these countries ? Not at all. Why then should the use of English as our official language undermine our national independence and sovereignty ? The adoption of a particular language as the official language of a given country, as such, has nothing to do with the weakening or strengthening of national independence and sovereignty of that country. Besides, if we examine the role of English in our country, we shall not find any shade of such an apprehension. It goes without saying that the British imperialist rulers introduced English education in our country not with the object of acquainting the Indian people with the progressive thoughts and ideas of the West but for the purpose of creating a band of English-knowing “natives” necessary for running the imperialist administration and carrying on imperialist exploitation smoothly and effectively in India. English education, no doubt, served these interests of the imperialist rulers of India. But along with the creation of a band of English knowing “native” clerks, it also gave birth to the intelligentsia, the pioneer in our struggle for national

independence. We can never forget that these pioneers were the products of not *Tols* and *Madrashas* but of English education. If English had, during the period of our political subjugation, helped the different nationalities in India, speaking different languages and separated by feudal disunity, to acquire the common psychological make-up of oneness, the essential condition for the growth and development of the very concept of Indian nationhood itself, imbibe the spirit of nationalism, conduct national liberation movement, develop as Indian nation and ultimately win national independence, is it not absurd to think that its continued use as the official language in the post-independence period will undermine our national independence and sovereignty? It is not language, far less the official language, but precisely the friendly ties with the big imperialist powers leading to imperialist intervention, influence and exploitation, which actually undermine the national independence and sovereignty of a country. And what is India's position there? The ministers and the monopolists in our country, who miss no opportunity of attacking English on the alleged ground that its retention as our official language is nationally humiliating, do not feel the slightest humiliation to invite foreign finance capital to our country and allow it to exploit our natural resources and cheap labour power in increasing degree. Nor do they feel it nationally humiliating to remain tied to the apron strings of the British Commonwealth, an imperialist organisation, even after independence. It even does not concern them at all to expose our defence to the inspection, supervision and influence of the British and US military generals, well known

throughout the world for acts endangering peace, national independence and sovereignty of the weaker nations in Asia, Africa and the Latin America. It is indeed an irony of fate that we are to hear that the continued use of English as the official language is nationally humiliating from those, who are engaged in almost selling our country away to the dollar-god in exchange of so-called aids and loans. Then again, those, who are most vociferous in condemning English in season and out of season, are themselves most active in getting their wards admitted in English medium schools and colleges in India. Some of them cannot think of getting their wards admitted in any school other than expensive aristocratic public schools in England or in the USA even for primary education. The stand of the late Prime Minister of India is a typical example of it. He advocated for the acceptance of Hindi as the official language but nevertheless got his grandsons admitted in the public schools in England. Had these leaders really believed in the correctness of their argument, they would not have possibly sent their children to England or America or to aristocratic English medium schools and colleges in India. Since they know that for many more years to come it is the English knowing persons who will continue to occupy offices of position and power, they are leaving no stone unturned to give the best possible English education to their children, though they are asking common Hindi-speaking people to shun English. Is it not double facedness?

Let us now examine the third argument that the retention of English as the official language of India will keep politics and other higher thoughts confined

among a handful of English-knowing persons. One cannot but pity the gentlemen, who argue thus for their muddle-headedness. For, they confuse the question of official language with that of the medium of instruction. It should be realized that the problem of advancement of learning and eradication of mass illiteracy do not concern the question of official language, which is at present the issue under discussion. It concerns the question of the medium of instruction, which we are going to discuss next. Whatever may be the official language, Hindi or English or both, mother-tongue of the student should be the medium of instruction from the lowest to the highest stage of education, which will give every opportunity to our people to acquire knowledge in the politics and other higher thoughts. So it is wrong to argue that the retention of English as the official language will prevent the common men in our country from acquiring knowledge in politics and other branches of arts and science.

Medium of Instruction

Thus, none of the three arguments of the protagonists of “Angraji Hatao” slogan against the retention of English as the official language of India stands the test of logic. Now let us examine the different issues involved in the language question. The first issue relates to the medium of instruction. What should be the medium of instruction in our schools, colleges and universities? It is accepted by all, and the Government is committed to it, that in the interest of both quantity and quality, education at all stages, from the lowest to the highest, should be imparted in the

mother-tongue of the taught. Hence, the question of either continuing English for good or replacing it by Hindi in non-Hindi-speaking states, as the medium of instruction and examination cannot at all arise, regardless of what may be our official language. The non-Hindi speaking states should have their respective national languages (unjustly termed as “regional languages” in the Indian Constitution) while the Hindi-speaking states should have Hindi as the medium of instruction at all levels of education.

No Neglect of English in the Intervening Period

The imparting of education upto the highest stage through the mother tongue of the taught requires the fulfilment of three conditions. *First*, the different national languages in India, which are the mother-tongues of our students, should be so rich as to be able to express the latest and most intricate thoughts not only in art and literature but in philosophy, science, technology, jurisprudence and other branches of knowledge as well. *Secondly*, there should be sufficient number of qualified teachers capable of teaching upto the highest stage not in English as at present but in the mother tongue of the taught. *Thirdly*, there should be standard books on all branches of knowledge upto the highest stage and standard translations of all judicial decisions of High Courts and Supreme Court of our country in all the thirteen national languages* (Sanskrit may be excluded). We should not be vainglorious and assert that these conditions have been fulfilled by us. In

*Number of national languages under 8th Schedule is now 22.

spite of our best wishes, we have not yet been able to fulfil these tasks and consequently, we have had to keep English as the medium of instruction in our universities. The only rational course now, therefore, is to seriously work for an all-out development of the national languages and fulfil these three conditions in the shortest possible time so that we can, in near future, switch on to our mother-tongues as the medium of instruction at all levels, not excluding the level of post-graduate study and research work thereafter. So long as that is not done we can ill afford to neglect English. For, since we have not been able to develop our mother-tongues to such an extent as we can use them as the medium of instruction at the highest level of education, neglect of English at the primary and secondary stage will only create a void at the postgraduate stage, where we are still compelled to use English as the medium of instruction and examination. It should be realized that though we want to switch on to our mother tongues as the medium of instruction at all levels of education from the primary to the university stage, we do not like to do it in a namby-pamby manner, at the cost of the quality of our education. Change we must but only when complete changeover is objectively possible. Such a changeover never calls for neglect of English. We can learn English well and after that we can drop it and switch on to our mother-tongues, when conditions for such a change are ripe. The theory of gradual replacement of English has created a national psychology, which is encouraging neglect of English, which still remains the only key to higher studies in our country, bringing in its wake a general fall in the

standard of our education. So, those reverend professors, who are attributing the cause of the deteriorating quality of the product of our schools, colleges and universities to the retention of English alone, should realize that it is the neglect of English at the primary and secondary stage at a time, when we are compelled to keep it as the medium of instruction in the post-graduate classes, together with the present education policy of the Government and our failure to make the mother-tongue the medium of instruction at the highest stage of education, that is cumulatively responsible for the deteriorating quality of our education.

Official Language for Intra-State Work

Let us now take up the second issue involved in the language question. What should be the official language for intra-state work? India is a bourgeois democratic country, where the Indian capitalist class is in power and our people have very little real democracy. Even this bourgeois democracy demands for its effective functioning the democratization of administrative apparatus and other state and public organisations. And democratization presupposes the adoption of national language of the people of the state for intra-state official work. Not to do it means, in reality, to deprive the vast masses of the people of the state of their right to take part in the affairs of the state. This being the position, it is only reasonable that all intra-state official work, including the work of courts upto the High Court, should be done in the mother-tongue of the people of the state concerned with safeguard for the linguistic

minorities there. The different Governments are committed to this policy at least on paper.

Issue of a Link-language

We are now left with the following issues involved in the language question. Since people belonging to different nationalities in India speaking different languages will have their respective mother-tongues as the medium of instruction upto the highest stage of education, there will remain the necessity of a common medium of communication between them in the sphere of higher thought. What should be the medium of communication in the sphere of higher thought ? Then again what should be the official language for communication between the different states? Moreover, there is the problem of international communication. These issues involve the necessity of a link-language. What should be this link-language? Should it be English or should it be Hindi ? In selecting the link-language one should be guided by science and not by the pragmatic consideration that the adoption of a particular language as the link language will give a particular linguistic community an additional advantage over other linguistic communities in the matter of securing government service etc. In deciding what should be this link language the point for consideration is also not what percentage of our people speak a language. Rather the points, that we are to consider, are we should select such a language as link-language as will not (1) create apprehension in the mind of any linguistic community in our country about the development of its mother-tongue and impair people's unity, (2) bring in cultural set-back and (3) put

the people in trouble in their day to day work under the circumstances obtaining at present. The language, that will best solve the above mentioned issues, shall be the link language. Considered from that angle, English and not Hindi should be this link-language on the following grounds. *First*, whether English or Hindi, it will mean for the non-Hindi speaking people, who constitute about 60 percent of India's total population, the learning of a new language over and above their respective mother tongues, which has got to be learnt as the medium of instruction. In the case of learning a new language one cannot but prefer a rich modern language like English, capable of expressing all modern, literary, philosophical and scientific thoughts. For as we all know, language is a medium, an instrument, with the help of which people communicate with one another, exchange thoughts and understand each other. Language is more than a medium of communication of thought. It is the very vehicle of thought itself. Man does not think in vacuum. He thinks with the help of language ; whatever the thoughts, that may arise in the mind of man, they can arise and exist only on the basis of language materials, language terminology and phrases. Bare thought free from language material never exists. Language is the direct reality of thought. Thus a language, which is poor and undeveloped, is not only weak as medium of communication of thought, and, so, incapable of expressing higher and modern thoughts. It, at the same time, stands as an obstacle in the way of higher thinking as well. A person, who knows only a poor undeveloped language, cannot grasp higher thoughts. So, the acceptance of Hindi, which is still now not so

developed, as a means of communication in the sphere of higher thought between different nationalities speaking different languages has pregnant in it the inevitable danger of retarding the progress of thought itself and consequent cultural set back in our country, from the pernicious results of which our people, both Hindi speaking as well as non-Hindi-speaking, will have no escape. It may be asked why we should adopt English and not any other language as rich and powerful as English. The reason is quite simple. The historical condition, in which we were placed, made us accept English as the official language of India. It has successfully served as the medium of communication of higher thoughts among the intellectuals belonging to different nationalities speaking different languages and as the vehicle of higher thought itself in our country. It is still serving us in these capacities with success. Unless blinded by narrow nationalism, why should we abandon such a powerful instrument, which history has placed at our disposal ? *Secondly*, if we adopt English as the link-language, it can, at the same time, serve very well as a powerful medium of international communication, *Thirdly*, it can also serve as the window to the vast world of thought, which lie beyond the limits of our country. This purpose cannot be served at all by Hindi in its present state of development. *Fourthly*, if Hindi is accepted as the official language of India, it is sure to lead to official attempts to relegate to all other national languages in India a position inferior to that of Hindi. It will create a permanent breeding ground of disunity of our people. By putting a premium on the development of Hindi through state backing and patronage, it will also

create obstacles to equal opportunity for the development of national languages in India. This apprehension is not confined now to mere misgiving. It has become an objective reality. The acceptance of English as the official language of India will negate the apprehended trend and will open up the scope and possibility of equal opportunities being given by the state to all the national languages for their development. *Fifthly*, contrary to the wishful thinking that the acceptance of Hindi as India's official language will accelerate the process of national integration, we all see that it has badly disrupted the unity of our people. Whatever may be the advantage of an official language, one must not forget that the advantage cannot supersede the fundamental necessity of maintaining the unity of our people. Retention of English as the official language of India will at least put a stop to the process of disintegration started by the imposition of Hindi. *Sixthly*, if English is accepted as the link-language, it will place all the major nationalities on equal footing, in so far as the learning of language is concerned. Because, in that case every nationality in India will have to learn English in addition to its own mother-tongue. But if Hindi is accepted as the official language, the non-Hindi speaking people will have to learn English, Hindi and their respective mother-tongues while the Hindi-speaking people only English and Hindi, since English cannot be altogether dropped in the present circumstances, when it is the only key to the world of higher thought in our case. The learning of three languages entails too much pressure on the taught and is a huge waste. This is the accepted opinion of eminent

educationists for which they have advised to reduce the number of languages to be learnt by the student to the minimum. The continued use of English as the official language of India reduces the number to minimum. The two-language formula in the sphere of education can then and then only be a reality. Thus, from all considerations, English and not Hindi should be the link-language, which should also be the official language of India.

Law of Development of a Single National Language

We know that there are persons, and their number is not insignificant, who even after so much of discussion herein before may be blunt enough to ask us : “Since English can never be the language of the common masses, what should be the language for daily intercourse between the common men belonging to different nationalities speaking different languages in our country ?” These persons demand that Hindi should be made the lingua franca of India. Our reply to these gentlemen is that this question does not arise. Because, are we not having such daily intercourse even now without making Hindi the lingua franca of India by legislation ? Those who think that Hindi can be made the lingua franca in a multi-national, multi-lingual country like India by legislative measures are living in a fool’s paradise. Such a step will only develop more resistance among the non-Hindi speaking people in our country against Hindi, create a perpetual source of disunity between the Hindi-speaking and the non-Hindi-speaking people and thereby delay the very process of the development of a single all-national language. The status as official language cannot objectively make a language the single all-national language in a multi-national, multi-lingual country like India. English was the official

language of India for more than a hundred years. It had the additional advantage of being the medium of instruction in schools, colleges and universities in our country. Still it has failed to emerge as the single all-national language understandable to common men of India. No better result can be expected if Hindi is made the official language of India, though the people may be compelled to learn it. Similarly wrong are those, who are contemplating to solve this problem of a single all-national language by creating overnight a made-to-order artificial language in India. These gentlemen should better remember the fate of Esperanto in this regard. To tackle the question as to how the emergence of a single national language in a multi-national, multi-lingual country like ours takes place, we must know the law of development of language. By knowing the law and acting properly, we can accelerate the process of development of a single national language. And what is that law?

Language is a social phenomenon which arises and develops with the rise and development of society. Apart from society there is no language. So, language and its laws of development can be understood only if it is studied in inseparable connection with the history of society, with the history of the people to whom the language under study belongs. For the very existence of society and of the people, exchange of ideas is a constant and vital necessity. Because, without it, it is impossible to co-ordinate the actions of the people in the struggle against the forces of nature, in the struggle to produce the necessary material values and to ensure the success of society's productive activities. Without it, social production becomes impossible. Thus we see that in course of men's struggle against the forces of nature and environment, in their definite connections and relations with one another for the production of necessary material values, languages came into

being. They developed by absorbing the dialects and jargons of different clans, linguistic communities, tribes and nationalities through hundreds and hundreds of years. The modern Indian languages also grew and developed in this way. At the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century, with the establishment of centralized British administration in India and rapid development of trade and commerce, involving closer intercourse between the different nationalities speaking different languages, more particularly for contact with the advanced ideas and highly developed language and literature of the West, the modern Indian languages rapidly developed surpassing all their previous records. But then this development was uneven; some of the languages like Bengali, Urdu, Tamil, Telugu and Marathi made considerable headway towards progress while the others moved, so to say, limping. Even the developed national languages like Bengali, Urdu, etc., had a stunted development. Political subjugation and the alien ruler's apathetic attitude towards the different national languages in India were responsible for this stunted development. So what was required of the Government in the post-independence period was not the imposition of Hindi in hot haste but to adopt such a language policy, as would give equal opportunities to all the national languages in India, ensure their rapid development so as to make it possible for our people to have access to all the branches of knowledge upto the highest stage through the medium of their respective mother-tongues in the shortest possible time and create the proper atmosphere for co-operation between the people belonging to different nationalities, all leading to natural and spontaneous inter-crossing of the different national languages, the only correct process for the emergence of a single all-national language in a multi-nationality, multi-lingual country like ours.

The instances of such inter-crossing of languages and the emergence of a single national language in the past history of mankind furnish solid reason to conclude that the language crossing is a prolonged process, which takes hundreds of years for giving real shape to the emergence of a single national language. It cannot be achieved, rather the very process is disturbed, by artificial interference or blow by the Government in the form of legislation. In India a single all-national language can emerge only through the very very lengthy process, taking hundreds of years, of natural and spontaneous inter-crossing of the different national languages here, based on the daily intercourse, co-operation and common activities of the people belonging to different nationalities in our country. It may be that before a single all-national language emerges, there will emerge first the most enriched single zonal language for each of the north, south, east and west zones, whereafter the zonal languages will merge giving rise to a single all-national language, which of course, will be neither of the existing national languages but be a new language. It may also be that Hindi, Hindustani and Urdu will first combine to give rise to a single zonal language of North India, which, in course of time, by absorbing the word stocks, jargons and dialects of other linguistic communities, may emerge as the single all-national language of India. The third probability may be the emergence of English as the single all-national language of India, if English is made the sole official language or link-language and if the door of education upto the highest stage is really opened for the masses of our people. We cannot altogether rule out this remotest possibility, considering the place of English in our national life and in view of the process of development of one single national language and one single international language. We cannot say at this stage what will really shape out in future ; we

are trying to indicate only the complicated process of the emergence of one single national language in our country. Whatever may be the position, this single all-national language, when it will emerge, may retain the grammatical system and the basic word stocks of any particular national language, showing its akinness to that particular national language, but in any case, it will be a new language formed by absorbing the best elements of all the national languages. So if we really want to help the emergence of single all-national language, we should refrain from imposing Hindi or any other national language giving a premium in the matter of its development over all other national languages and thereby creating a perpetual ground for disunity of our people. To put it in a positive way, our duty now is to so work as to dispel all mutual mistrust, that has, of late, grown between the people belonging to different nationalities here centring round the question of India's official language, abolish all attempts to suppress any language, objectively ensure equality of opportunities for the all out development of all the national languages, re-establish people's unity, bring into being the full blossoming of all the national languages and thereby accelerate the process of emergence of one single national language through natural and spontaneous inter-crossing of these languages.

We cannot also forget that in a capitalist society the people are not only exploited economically; they suffer from national oppression as well. Under capitalism the dominant nationality invariably oppresses the national minority on question of language, way of life, etc. This national oppression is noticeable in almost all multi-national, multi-lingual capitalist states in some form or other. The attack on the Scotch by the English in Great Britain or on the Negro in the USA is an expression of this national oppression. The attempt to impose Hindi on the non-

Hindi speaking people in our country is another illustration of national oppression. It is only under socialism that national oppression is completely eliminated along with the elimination of the material and cultural base for all sorts of exploitation. Thus the permanent solution to the national question and along with it to the language question in our country is to be sought in the victory of socialism, which calls for militant unity of our people belonging to all the nationalities against the ruling capitalist class. Under the circumstances, while considering the question of India's official language or of the emergence of a single all-national language we cannot but take into serious account the fact that the national democratic revolution in our country being accomplished in a half-baked way, the different nationalities have not completely merged their entity as nationality in the broad concept of Indian nation. They still possess the nationality sentiment. This situation gives the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nationalities the opportunity to exploit the nationality sentiment of the people of the oppressed nationalities to further its narrow class interests under the garb of a struggle against national oppression by the dominant nationality. All matters concerning the language question, be it the question of India's official language, or of the emergence of a single all-national language, therefore, call for our serious consideration and very cautious steps that may be taken in this regard. Hence nothing whatsoever can be encouraged or supported, which has the effect of disrupting the unity of our people. Both the non-Hindi-speaking and the Hindi-speaking people must always bear it in mind.

**Not a Movement against Hindi
or Hindi speaking People**

Though the sponsors of the movement are saying that the

movement is not against Hindi or the Hindi speaking people yet we are viewing with grave concern that the tendency to rouse passion against Hindi and Hindi speaking people is there. The sponsors and supporters of the movement must realize that the very purpose of the language movement will be frustrated if the movement is not freed from the anti-people tendency. The Hindi-speaking and the non-Hindi-speaking people should realize that it is they and they alone, who by their joint and united struggle can foil the sinister design of the reactionaries behind the language question. So it must be realized by the Hindi-speaking people that the movement for retaining English as India's official language is not a movement against the development of Hindi or the Hindi-speaking people. Rather the acceptance of Hindi as the official language of India is standing as an obstacle to the development of all other national languages in India and creating a perpetual ground for disunity. It is a movement against the present capitalist rulers of our country, who are out to exploit the natural pro-Hindi sentiment of the Hindi-speaking people in their class interest. It is to the interest of the Hindi-speaking people to support this movement. *Firstly because*, it has been already discussed how the acceptance of Hindi as the link-language will bring about a cultural setback in our country, which will affect the Hindi-speaking people no less than the non-Hindi-speaking people. This cultural setback will delay the emancipation of our people, both Hindi-speaking and non-Hindi-speaking, from the yoke of present capitalist exploitation. To conduct and develop correctly the revolutionary struggle to overthrow capitalism and establish socialism, our people have got to be acquainted with the latest and intricate epistemological problems confronting life and society. It is impossible to acquire this knowledge, at this stage, through any of our mother-tongues. In the absence of

this knowledge the people will not be in a position to fully realize the theories of anti-capitalist working class movement, resulting in the weakening of the revolutionary theoretical movement. And here works the class interest of the Indian bourgeoisie to replace English by Hindi. *Secondly because*, the Hindi-speaking people should know that English is going to continue for many more years to come, even if Hindi is made the official language of India. So, the English knowing persons will hold their sway over the administrative and economic apparatus and other public and private institutions. Now if the Hindi-speaking common men abandon English completely, as the Muslim community abandoned English at the beginning of English education in our country, the former will have to suffer the same consequences as the latter suffered. It takes not much intelligence to understand why the VIP's are giving their sons and nephews best possible English education even though they are engaged in carrying tirade against English. The motive is perfectly clear. They want to rouse the anti-English fanaticism of the Hindi-speaking common men so that the latter do not give their wards English education. It will give the sons, daughters and nephews of the VIP's the advantage of enjoying virtual monopoly in securing offices of position and power at the cost of the interest of common Hindi-speaking men and women. The common Hindi-speaking men and women should not, therefore, allow themselves to be used as pawns in the anti-English manoeuvring movement. Hence they should work together with the non-Hindi speaking people so as to defeat the pro-capitalist language policy of the Government. The non-Hindi speaking people should also realize that narrow local nationalism is not the way to defeat the pro-capitalist language policy of the Government. Unity with the Hindi speaking people is an essential condition for solving the language question

scientifically. So consistent and patient attempts should be made to convince the Hindi-speaking people of the necessity of retaining English as the link-language, drag them into the movement to defeat the language policy of the Government, forge and maintain people's unity, fight all sorts of parochialism and provincialism and march forward in the struggle for socialism.

Our people, Hindi speaking and non-Hindi speaking, should, therefore, demand that:

1. The Constitution of India be so amended, as to allow English to continue as the official language of India, recognise it as one of the national languages in India and recognise all the languages, as contained in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution, as, national languages;
2. The national language of each state be used for official work within that state;
3. Equal opportunities and help be given to all the national languages in India for their speedy development, no premium being given for the development of Hindi or any other national language,
4. Effective steps be taken to develop the national languages in the shortest possible time that they can be successfully used as the medium of instruction even at the highest stage of education, and
5. The compulsory learning of Hindi by non-Hindi speaking students now in vogue be dropped and in the matter of learning languages in school, the two-language formula (mother tongue and English) be adopted.