

INTRODUCTION

[Why This Note]

1. I pen this note with great reluctance and under a sense of deep responsibility. At Srinagar, on 19th June, 1956, when I, along with my colleagues of the O.L.C. (*i.e.* Official Language Commission), was asked to sign what will be presented to the President as our Report under Article 344(2) of the Constitution of India (shortly C. of I.), I had reluctantly to record that I signed it subject to my separate note. This I present now for incorporation in the Report.

I

2. We were appointed by the President under Article 344(1) of the C. of I. Our duty as the O.L.C. is prescribed by the C. of I. itself in the next clause of that article, *viz.* Article 344(2). It contains five sub-clauses (a), (b), (c), (d) and (e) laying down the items of the duty of the Commission to make recommendations to the President. These constitute the terms of reference to the O.L.C.

3. The next clause, *i.e.*, Article 344(3) is in the form of a directive to the O.L.C. asking it to have 'due regard to the industrial, cultural and scientific advancement of India and the just claims and the interests of persons belonging to the non-Hindi speaking areas in regard to the public services', when making its recommendations under Article 344(2). The directive connotes two safeguards (1) regard for our manifold national advancement and (2) protection for the interests of non-Hindi speaking areas, particularly in the public services.

4. It may be noted that no need is felt to mention India's unity as a directive in the Article. National unity is implicit in the Constitution, as it informs and infuses the whole of it. It follows therefrom that, whatever linguistic pattern or the settlement of the language problem that the Constitution of India envisages and has laid down is held to be consistent with the paramount need of India's unity. Rather, we might say that the pattern portrayed or the solution laid down by the Constitution is true to such need and is so laid down because it will subserve this basic fact of our national existence. Hence if the O.L.C. kept itself true to that pattern when making its recommendations, one need not worry that it will cause any harm to India's unity as envisaged by the Constitution of our country.

II

5. The first four sub-clauses of Article 344(2), *viz.* (2) (a) (b) (c) and (d) and Article 344(3) noted in the paras above are bodily taken from that Article and reproduced as part of the terms of reference to the O.L.C. The fifth term of reference about the need of a time-schedule is occasioned by Article 344(2) (e) of the C. of I.

which says: "any other matter referred to the Commission as regards the official language of the Union and the language for communication between the Union and a State or between one State and another and their use".

6. Under this sub-clause of the said Article 344(2), the President asked the O.L.C., in its fifth term of reference (e), for "the preparation of a time-schedule according to which and the manner in which Hindi may replace English as the official language of the Union and as a language for communication between the Union and State Governments and between one State Government and another".

7. The sub-clause entrusts the O.L.C. with a clear and specific duty, viz., that it should recommend to the President a clear-cut policy and programme giving a time-schedule for, and the manner of, gradually replacing English by Hindi which is to be the official language of the Union and that of the States also for the latter's communication with the Union and amongst themselves.

8. This is a very specific and significant reference. It asks for submitting a time-schedule for, and showing the manner of, the replacement of English by introducing the progressive use of the language of the Union and restricting the use of English from what it obtains at present.

III

9. The terms of reference to the O.L.C., particularly the fifth one spotlighted above, must be understood in the background of another relevant fact or two that we were appointed at the "expiration of five years from the commencement of the C. of I." and that under the Constitution another O.L.C. will follow in 1960 with a similar duty. Further, it is laid down, as a working target for framing such a time table, that the process of the transition from English be so thought out and planned as to give a reasonable assurance that it will be almost on its way to be complete by 1965. If as a result of its inquiry the O.L.C. might feel that this was not possible by 1965, it might say so and recommend the transition of replacement time-scheduled accordingly. My point is that our recommendations should give a clear-cut policy and programme, which if worked out, may be reasonably expected to lead to the fulfilment of the time-target set down by the Constitution.

10. Further, there is, in this connection of the time-schedule, another fact deserving notice. Though we are the first O.L.C. we had not to work on a clean slate: we come in the field of the language question after the expiration of five years from 1950, during which the Governments of the Union and the States were required to begin this work of promoting the spread of Hindi and preparing for the transition from English to Indian languages. My point is that the O.L.C. does not begin its work at the beginning, but that Governments have begun to move and do something, both at the Union and the State levels, in this matter of their constitutional duty of the

linguistic change-over enjoined by the C. of I. In this field the non-official world also has been active in its own way, which is noteworthy and to be welcomed as the earnest of its good will and active cooperation in this matter.

11. Naturally the O.L.C.'s examination and inquiry of the problem set to it and its recommendations will have to be largely based on the picture of work done during the first five years. Therefore a clear and precise appraisal and constructive review of the work done during the period 1950—55, both in the official and the non-official sectors of the field, becomes necessary, so that actual difficulties and impediments that might have held up, thwarted, retarded or restricted the process of the change-over might be considered and future programmes and policies be so devised as to overcome them and set the matter aright.

IV

12. The O.L.C. went into such an inquiry and has noted its findings in the report. The picture presented is not satisfactory. Admittedly, as the Madras Government Explanatory memorandum submitted to the O.L.C. says, "the problems involved in organising the transition from English to Hindi at the Centre are numerous, varied and complex". The task of tackling them, particularly in a multilingual situation like ours, is indeed very trying and difficult. However, what is pertinent to note here is that, (in the words of the said memorandum which says further) "these problems have not even been completely surveyed and mapped out. The solutions are yet to be worked out. Though five years have passed out of the 15 stipulated as the transition period, the transition process has not yet commenced".

13. Our inquiry into the work done during 1950—55 corroborates this remark and one might well say therefrom, without any fear of contradiction, that there is not visible on the Indian scene anything like an active all-India movement clearly mapped out and made operative in such a way as to have to ourselves some reasonable assurance that the transition is on its way and will be duly negotiated by 1965, with the help of the recommendations of two O.L.C.'s that will be instituted by the President to that end. The demand by the President from the O.L.C. for a time-schedule which will obviously entail consideration of setting up all-India targets must be understood in this background of first five years' work as well.

V

14. The need of a clear-cut policy with a time-schedule at least covering the period of the 1st O.L.C.'s jurisdiction, I mean, 1956—60, is further highlighted by another very important and noteworthy consideration. Article 344(1) of the C. of I. says that the President shall constitute the O.L.C. consisting of the representatives of the languages of India specified in its Eighth schedule. If we examine the Article further we find that this body is privileged under the Constitution to have the right of initiative in the matter of negotiating the transition from English to India's languages. The recommendations of this body, as reported upon by the Parliament Committee to be constituted under Article 344(4), shall be the basis for

the Presidential directions in this matter. This shows that neither the said Parliament Committee nor the President can add any new matter to the recommendations submitted by the O.L.C. It, in a way, invests the republic of the languages of India with veto power in the field of the language transition. No coercive or such-like powers of the Central Government will be used in a way that may appear like imposing Hindi on any linguistic area.

15. In this connection I may note a significant answer that a very important witness of a non-Hindi speaking State gave to a question— if the Centre decides to use Hindi in its communication with States, how would you prepare for it? The answer given was, 'If it is imposed on me, I would secede from the Union'. (I write this question and answer from memory and in my words, as I have not before me a copy of this oral evidence).

16. This emphasises still further not only the need of a policy and a time-schedule, but also that it must be such as may be accepted by non-Hindi speaking areas in particular. We found that Bengal and Tamil Nad in particular were thinking not in terms of replacement but of retention of English for the time being, for reasons I may not go into at this stage of my note. I may only remark here that this feeling in the South and the East must be removed by virtue of our recommendations and an all-India plan of work made operative as their result. This can be done only if we suggest clear-cut all-India targets with a time-schedule broadly laid down for the transition programme.

17. In this connection I agree with my colleague Dr. Subbarayan where he says in his note that "though there is an attempt in the Report to frame a time-schedule for introduction of Hindi as the official language of the Union by 1965, there is really no time-schedule as I would conceive it". It would not do to say that it was not possible because the Government of India did not suggest anything like it to the O.L.C. This would perhaps be like putting the cart before the horse. Under the Constitution of India it is the O.L.C. which has to initiate proposals in this matter and the President has specifically asked for them from us as one of our duties.

VI

18. I referred above (*vide* para. 12) to the Explanatory Memorandum of the Government of Madras where it said that the language transition process has not still commenced. It further remarks that "nor is (it) likely to commence until the reconstruction of States is completed on the basis of the recommendations of the S.R.C. and detailed decisions are reached after the conclusion of the labours of the O.L.C. and the O.L. Committee of Parliament which will follow it".

19. The remark pinpoints two things: the vital relationship of the problem of States reorganisation with that of language transition, and the need of a detailed map of the transition from English to Indian languages. Both of these things will be before the people now: The S.R. Bill is before the Parliament and the O.L.C. will be

concluding its labours shortly and will report to the President next month. What is noteworthy here is that our labours as the O.L.C. are expected to give 'detailed decisions' on various matters connected with the transition.

20. Obviously the transition process has mainly to start in non-Hindi-speaking States.* They must begin to learn Hindi and get ready to use it for the purposes of their inter-State and Union-State communication. They should also begin to replace English with the State's official language or languages as decided by them. This decision has not been still taken by many States.

21. In some of the States we found that there was a strong inclination to retain English, even though they declared that they would have their regional languages as State Official Languages. Why this reluctance on their part is, for instance, clearly stated by the Madras Government in their Explanatory Memorandum quoted above. Discussing the question "why no serious step has been taken so far to bring about a change in the official language of the State" it says—

"While it is true that the decisions regarding the official language of the State are to be taken independently of the decision regarding the official language of the Union, the probable repercussions on the State Administration and the State educational system must be understood and allowed for. . . . But no decision about the changes at the Centre appeared likely until the O.L.C. studied the problem".

22. It is not that Madras or Bengal or other non-Hindi areas have not shown their mind on these matters of the medium of State administration and education. Their fears and apprehensions are whether it will be ratified by the O.L.C. or whether they, as a result of its recommendations, will be confronted with a situation from the Centre in which their decisions could have no free scope of implementation. The present situation in the country, specially in non-Hindi speaking areas in the South and the East, *vis-a-vis* the transition is therefore, so to say, in such suspended animation. While they accept the constitutional clause about Hindi as the official language of the Union, they ask for retaining English along with it and they continue to retain it at the State level both in administration and education. Surely this is a very great hurdle in starting the all-India movement for transition. It must be removed. It will not do to postpone this duty to the next O.L.C. to come in 1960-61, unless we agree to lose the precious next five years also.

23. Therefore it is very necessary that a proper dynamic for a nation-wide movement for the change-over both at the Union and the State levels is found out and set in motion as a result of our recommendations. This means that in their total effect and significance,

*Hindi-speaking States will also have to replace English at the State level as other States, with this difference that they will not have to learn a new language as the non-Hindi speaking States.

our recommendations should succeed in allaying fears and apprehensions obtaining at present in the non-Hindi speaking areas about the nature and form of linguistic set-up that will come about in future as a result of our recommendations. I am afraid, our recommendations leave a good something to be desired in this respect.

VII

24. Till now I have written about the specific and main duty enjoined on us by the President. I admit that in fulfilling it properly, the O.L.C. might be required to ramify its inquiry into related issues, which, strictly speaking, may be outside the letters of its terms of reference.

25. As such issues the O.L.C. has chosen to have medium of instruction for higher education, nature scope and development of Hindi and other languages of India, the place of English in the educational system of the country, etc. Obviously, these matters are clearly not within the scope of the work of the O.L.C. Most of them are State subjects and as such are within the powers of agencies, official and non-official, of the States. If, as is often said, these are matters in which the question of the unity of India is concerned, surely the C. of I. would have gone into them and enjoined specific lines and directions for them. As we see, it has done nothing of the sort. These are rather questions wherein enlightened opinion of the free world is clear and unequivocal. Free as we are now as a people, we have to arrange our house in accordance with it.

26. Again, most of these extraneous matters into which the O.L.C. has allowed itself to be drawn are the very things regarding which, as we saw above, the people of the States feel keenly and are uneasy about how the O.L.C. will react to them and report. They also fear how the Government of India, with the wide powers it has and the over-all authority it can wield in various ways, will use its legal, i.e. coercive powers in this behalf. As I said above, it is this thing which impedes the movement for the change-over to start and make headway. The O.L.C. report, in this regard, has not only 'over-flown' the terms of reference, but also overstepped them and made suggestions and remarks which, to say the least, will not help allay fears and apprehensions noted above in this note.

27. I noted above from the oral evidence of a V.I.P. from a non-Hindi-speaking State. It illustrated the point from one direction. Quite the opposite direction was illustrated to us by a V.I.P. from another non-Hindi speaking State. He gave us the other side of the matter when he said that the programme of Hindi propagation in the official and even non-official sectors should be pushed on with the central authority and powers. (I may again say that I summarise the evidence from memory as I have no copy of it when I write this). It is such ideas and approach to the language problem which cause alarm of 'imposition of Hindi'.

28. As I said at the beginning, the O.L.C. will naturally go into related issues. Being the first one, it will try to draw general lines of the language problem and depict the essentials of its solution. My point however is that all this will be governed and limited by

the main consideration of its task, *viz.* the needs of replacement of English and the progressive use of Hindi for official purposes.

VIII

29. At the States level also the problem of replacement of English exists as badly as at the centre. English holds equal sway over the States both as the language of communication within the State and with the Union and other States and as the medium of instruction etc. The O.L.C. is not asked in its reference to directly concern itself with intra-State replacement of English. However, it cannot escape it, because replacement of English is an integral all-India process, which cannot be isolated at the State level. Rather, if it has at all to succeed, it should really begin there.

30. At the State level this replacement is a two-pronged movement. On one side the State will replace English in its administrative and educational systems by progressively using its recognised official language or languages; and on the other it will prepare itself to have Hindi for inter-State and Union-State communication, so that there may be no vacuum in the transitional stage. Both these movements must start simultaneously as one composite plan and a single unified process. Only thus can an all-India change-over be made a practical proposition. I feel that this aspect of the dynamics of the change-over is not brought out by the O.L.C.R. as much as it should be.

31. There is another point in this regard also. There is to be found an opinion or a school of thought in the country which, invoking the name of India's unity, says that we should have as much Hindi, in the State administration and education, as possible. The O.L.C.R. in this connection has made certain observations and has styled them as 'conclusions' as contradistinct from 'recommendations', the latter being strictly in regard to the terms of reference. I think these 'conclusions' might better and more modestly as well as appropriately be styled 'observations'. And I have felt that in their cumulative effect, these so-called 'conclusions' err in creating an impression that Hindi is sought to be used in places where it should better avoid conflict with the legitimate claims of regional or State languages. It is this avoidable conflict that would rather jeopardise India's unity by unwittingly provoking emotional mal-integration among linguistic groups.

IX

32. Again, at this stage of the work of progressive introduction of the use of Hindi, the Union language, it is very necessary that we must be clear about its nature and position. Hindi at present is only one of the languages of India of the Eighth schedule. Hindi as the language of the Union has only titular and prospective existence. Again Hindi is not a developed language like English, such as can be readily adopted in its place; nor does it command richness as would make it attractive for the purpose of literature, knowledge, etc. like English. However, if it is to be the all-India common language as has been decided in our Constitution, it must be learnt by non-Hindi speaking areas. But, as I said earlier, the whole matter is in suspended animation. It can become an active

living proposition only when these areas adopt it in their educational and administrative fields in place of English which rules to-day. This means that Hindi requires to be so developed.

33. Further, a common name 'Hindi' for both the official language of the Union and for a regional language of North India creates confusion in our thinking leading to mistaken decisions in various matters of immediate import and effect. For example, if we say that Hindi will be an alternate medium of all-India Services competitive examinations with English, it will only mean that it will benefit those only in the North whose regional language is Hindi, because Hindi as a common Union language has yet to come into existence. If we suggest that English should be replaced here, we should, in fairness, say that all regional languages will have equal recognition for the purpose. Hindi only can be possible only when it is a living second language of the non-Hindi speaking areas. When deciding about introducing Hindi for official purposes, this matter of the dual nature of Hindi and its development and enrichment for perfecting it as a vehicle competent to replace English is a very pertinent consideration.

34. The O.L.C.R., in its analysis of the problem of Hindi, noted two sectors on, I should think, a mistaken analogy of terms prevalent in economic planning today, *viz.* 'the public sector' and the 'private sector'. The former is the official sector; the latter is the non-official sector of the people's use of languages in education and public life. The latter is therefore really the 'national' sector where not the official language of the Union, but the national common language Hindi, India's Antar Bhasha will prevail. Like the two aspects of Hindi noted above, here also we have two aspects on the all-India plane.

35. We desire to replace English in both these sectors. Though related, both require to be examined separately also. While the official Hindi will be developed to a certain extent as a directed language under terminological and such other prescriptions laid down in Government manuals etc., the national language will emerge as a free growth through the efforts of our entire people. The latter will energise the former and make it not a mere official Esperanto or jargon, but a living and creative thing though directed in a particular manner by Government. This renders the whole question of replacement of English by Hindi not merely an official venture; it becomes a venture for the entire Indian people though they speak many tongues. In this great effort the Government of the land will lead and will have to be led by them.

36. To start such a process with the good will of all the units of the Union is the linguistic problem before the country. The C. of I. has indicated the main lines which such an effort should adopt. It is along them that the O.L.C.R. is asked to suggest a programme and a time-schedule for the next five years. My feeling is that the O.L.C.R. leaves an impression of not meeting this question in as categorical a manner as possible and essential in the present situation. In this introduction to my note, I have tried to show why I feel that way, by referring to some aspects of our work. I now propose to take the chief of them for a more detailed consideration.