

REFORM OF  
THE CHINESE WRITTEN  
LANGUAGE

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## CURRENT TASKS OF REFORMING THE WRITTEN LANGUAGE<sup>1</sup>

Chou En-lai

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### (1)

Current tasks of reforming the Chinese written language involve the simplification of the Chinese (Han)<sup>2</sup> characters, popularization of the common speech (*putonghua*)<sup>3</sup> and the drawing up and putting into practice of the Scheme for a Chinese Phonetic Alphabet.

The first task is the simplification of the Chinese characters. In January 1956 the State Council published the

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<sup>1</sup>This is a speech delivered at a meeting sponsored by the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, January 10, 1958.

<sup>2</sup>In this book Han is used interchangeably with Chinese. Strictly speaking, Han is the language of the Han nationality, the most numerous of the nationalities in China. Although some of China's minority nationalities have their own written languages, the most widely used is the Han; hence the word Chinese here actually means Han.

<sup>3</sup>Formerly known as the "National Language" or Mandarin, the most widely spoken form of Chinese which takes the Peking pronunciation as standard. Here, Chinese terms are spelt according to the Scheme for a Chinese Phonetic Alphabet described on pp. 48-52 in this book. The names of persons and places are still spelt according to Wade System.

Scheme for Simplifying Chinese Characters. This scheme falls into three parts. The first is a list of 230 simplified characters, which came into use when the scheme was published. The second is a list of 285 simplified characters, of which 95 came into use on a trial basis in June 1956. The third is a list of 54 simplified radicals.<sup>1</sup> Thirty characters derived from the radicals in this list also came into use on a trial basis, when the scheme was published. In all, the number of simplified characters now adopted by newspapers and magazines totals 355.

In the two years since the publication of the scheme, the simplified characters have been used in newspapers, magazines, textbooks and books in general, gaining a wide appeal. The broad mass of the people have found them useful and convenient. The simplification has rendered a great service, particularly to children and adults who have begun to learn the characters. When a school teacher in Honan told his pupils that the character 豐 (*feng* meaning abundant) in 豐收 (*fengshou* meaning abundant or good harvest) could be simplified into 丰 — three horizontal strokes and one vertical stroke — the pupils were so delighted that they clapped and cheered. A worker in Tientsin said he spent half a year in learning three characters: 盡 (*jin* meaning exhaust), 邊 (*bian* meaning margin), and 辦 (*ban* meaning do), but still could not remember them. When these characters were simplified into 尽, 边, 办, he could remember them right away. Comrade Li Feng-lien's<sup>2</sup> peasant brother

<sup>1</sup> A radical is a component part of a character common to a class of characters. For example, 江 (river), 浪 (waves), 湿 (wet) and 洗 (wash) all have the radical 氵 (water).

<sup>2</sup> Li Feng-lien is a nationally-known model worker.

wrote her from his home village saying that the peasants found difficulty in learning characters. Those which they most often used were complicated and difficult to write, such as 農 (*nong* meaning peasant), 穀 (*gu* meaning unhusked rice), 麵 (*mian* meaning flour), 麥 (*mai* meaning wheat), and 雜糧 (*zaliang* meaning miscellaneous grains). Comrade Li Feng-lien sent her brother a copy of the simplified characters which made him very happy. He replied that these new characters were so much easier to learn and he wished she had sent the book to him earlier.

It is clear that the simplified characters are easier to learn and to write than the characters in their original forms. It is, therefore, natural that the masses, including the workers, peasants, school pupils and school teachers, enthusiastically receive the simplified characters.

To intellectuals like us who, for decades, have been in constant touch with the characters, the memory of our early school-days has grown dim. Those were days when we were scolded, or even beaten on the palm of the hand by the teacher if we wrote the characters incorrectly. To us, therefore, it does not matter whether the characters are written in a complicated or a simple way. We are indifferent or even unaccustomed to the simplified characters, feeling rather unhappy about them. On this point, I agree with Mr. Li Chu-chen.<sup>1</sup> In an article in the *Language Reform Monthly*, Mr. Li Chu-chen wrote:

Every time the question of the reform of Chinese characters is brought up, somebody raises an objec-

<sup>1</sup> Li Chu-chen is a well-known industrialist and Minister of Light Industry.

tion, or even stubbornly opposes it for this or that reason. Some say that the characters are not difficult. I will say that such a person is like one who, as soon as his wounds are healed, forgets the pain he suffered. He forgets what he suffered when he first learned the *Three-Character Classics* and the *One-Thousand Characters*.<sup>1</sup> If he will but recall his bitter experience in learning characters, and consider the interests of the children and the illiterates by placing himself in their place, he will not dissent or object so strongly.

In the same article, Mr. Li further criticized those people who opposed simplification. He said that since the publication of the scheme, some people had declared that "they would become illiterates." Such regrets or misgivings are unnecessary. Many of the simplified characters are familiar to us. How can we become "illiterates"? Of course, some characters may be unfamiliar. But if we use a little mental effort, the difficulties will be overcome. In the interest of the broad mass of the working people and the millions of children, the intellectuals should not begrudge the little extra thinking involved.

Mr. Li likes the simplified forms of his own name, 李燭塵, 烛 (*chu*) for 燭 and 尘 (*chen*) for 塵. I think this is the correct way of looking at this question. Since the simplification of the characters is in the interest of the whole people, we intellectuals should actively support the work instead of remaining passive. We should consider the question of the language reform from the standpoint of the six hundred million people and not from personal habit or temporary convenience.

<sup>1</sup> Primers used in old-style Chinese schools.

In the early period of the rectification campaign, a number of rightists launched vicious attacks on the reform of the written language, alleging that the simplification of the Chinese characters was a failure and that the masses opposed it. They demanded that the State Council rescind its order and cancel the scheme for simplification. Of course, the rightists had an ulterior motive in their attack on the language reform. They used this as a pretext to assail the Party and the government. But it was also true that they opposed the language reform. The simplification of the characters is a good thing which is in the interest of the people. The rightists who opposed the people would naturally oppose it.

From the standpoint of the people, we should affirm definitely that simplification is a good thing, being in the interest of the people and being enthusiastically received by them. Trial use in the past two years has proved that the scheme is workable. It should be given emphatic support.

Does this mean that there is no defect in the work of simplification? Does this mean that none of the simplified characters listed in the scheme has been found unsuitable? Not at all. We must point out that the policy adopted in this simplification work is correct, as has been borne out by the experience of the past two years. But in practical work, thorough consideration has not been given in certain cases. Experience shows that a few simplified characters are either inappropriate in use or likely to result in ambiguity. In the case of these few characters which have been inappropriately simplified and proved defective in use, other simplified forms should be devised or the original forms retained.

In the Scheme for Simplifying Chinese Characters published by the State Council in January 1956, the 230 simplified characters in the first list have been put into use; no decision has yet been made on the 285 simplified characters in the second list and the 54 simplified radicals in the third list, and opinions on their use are still being solicited. As to the 230 simplified characters in the first list, should any of them be found inadvisable, necessary changes will be made. The Committee for Reforming the Chinese Written Language is now asking for suggestions from different quarters to help it carry out the revision work. You may send your suggestions, if any, to that committee. They will be given careful consideration, and further decision will be made.

At present, there exists a certain lack of consistency in the use of simplified characters. There are some who freely coin simplified characters which nobody except themselves can make out. This state of affairs is, of course, undesirable and should be properly controlled. A man may write any way he likes in a notebook or personal letter. That is his own business which concerns no one else. But a bulletin or notice is for all to see. It should be written in a standard form. Unrestrained use of simplified characters must be prevented especially in printed matter or typewritten documents. I hope that in the fields of journalism and publication and in secretarial work, attention will be paid to this aspect.

Some people put the blame on the Committee for Reforming the Chinese Written Language for this lack of consistency in the use of simplified characters. Of course, we can criticize the committee for not having done enough publicity on the simplification and for allowing this confusion in the use of simplified characters. On

the other hand, however, we should admit that the process of coining simplified characters has been going on all the time. The simplified characters which we all accept today were first coined by a few people. This process will go on and develop; it cannot be stopped.

The history of Chinese writing tells us that from the time of the oracle bone inscriptions, a character may have had more than one form. If this is lack of consistency, then it has come down from ancient times. We may say that today the characters have many more forms than before. The main reason is that nowadays the mass of the people have begun to master the written language and urgently demand that the characters be reformed—a situation which never existed in any period of our history. The general tendency in the evolution of characters is towards simplification. As characters are difficult to write, the people have continually created many simplified alternative constructions. In spite of the fact that the former rulers refused to accept the simplified forms, calling them “wrong words” or “vulgar words,” these forms persisted among the people and had a wide appeal. We should say, therefore, that long before the establishment of the Committee for Reforming the Chinese Written Language, the people had all along been doing the reforming. The committee’s work is only to collect and arrange in order what has been created by the people and, after thorough discussion, popularize the results.

We have also adopted a number of Chinese characters which have been simplified by the Japanese. It can be seen that the lack of consistency in the use of simplified characters has not been caused by the simplification work. Instead, the Scheme for Simplifying Chinese Characters

aims at bringing things into order. Only by taking active measures in simplification will the lack of consistency be gradually eradicated.

There is another question: Will the simplification adversely affect the spread of Chinese calligraphy and interfere with our appreciation of it? I don't think so. Calligraphy is an art; naturally it will not be restricted by the simplification. Simplified characters are used mainly in printing. We cannot compel everybody to write according to the scheme. Simplification, therefore, will not adversely affect the art of Chinese calligraphy. At the same time, we should welcome the writing of simplified characters by our calligraphers so that these simplified forms will appear more artistic.

## (2)

The second task is the popularization of the common speech (*putonghua*). Among the Han people, a great diversity of dialects exists—the diversity being mainly in pronunciation. People of different areas, each speaking their own dialect, can hardly understand one another. People of the same province (for example, northern and southern Fukien; northern and southern Kiangsu) find it difficult to carry on conversation. This diversity in dialects has an unfavourable effect on the political, economic and cultural life of our people. From time to time, government workers are transferred from the north to the south, university students in the south are appointed to places in the north, and workers in the coastal cities go to the interior to reinforce their fellow-workers in industrial construction. Without a common speech, we

shall, to greater or less extent, meet with difficulties in our national construction. It often happens that the listener fails to understand an important report or an important class lecture due to the dialectal barrier. Radio and the cinema are powerful publicity instruments. But as our common speech has not yet been made universal, their effectiveness in the districts where only local dialects are spoken is inevitably limited. Since liberation, China has achieved a national unification unknown before. The people throughout the country are striving, under the leadership of the Communist Party and the People's Government, to attain the common goal of building socialism. They feel more and more the urgent need of a common language. It is, therefore, an important political task to popularize vigorously the common speech with the Peking pronunciation as the standard.

Progress has been made to a certain extent in the popularization of the common speech since the National Conference for Reforming the Chinese Written Language, held in October 1955. At the end of 1957, there were, among the language teachers of the primary, secondary and normal schools in the whole country, 721,000 who had been trained in the phonetics of the common speech. A large number of primary and secondary schools have begun to use the common speech in teaching. More than two million people listen to the radio programme on the teaching of phonetics in the common speech, sponsored by the Central People's Broadcasting Station. Chang Hsi-jo, Minister of Education, reported that on an inspection tour in Sian, he found many primary school pupils there speaking the common speech very well. This shows that if we attach importance to this work and popularize it earnestly, we shall meet with success. We hope that in a



comparatively short period the education departments in different places will be able to complete the training of the entire body of language teachers in the primary and secondary schools so that the primary and secondary schools in the country can all begin to teach and learn the common speech.

To popularize the common speech with Peking pronunciation as the standard does not mean that we want all the Han people to speak exactly like Peking people. This is impossible and unnecessary. Peking pronunciation is a standard to which we can orientate ourselves. In practical popularization and in teaching and learning, however, demands are different for different persons. For example, we make stricter demands of radio announcers, cinema and stage actors and actresses, and language teachers in normal schools. Not so of the people in general. For the middle-aged or older, it is not necessary to make even a general demand. Thus, obstruction to the popularization of the common speech will be reduced to a minimum and confidence and interest in learning it will be increased. Where shall the common speech be popularized? I think it should be done first in the schools, and vigorously among the children and the young people.

Popularization of the common speech has as its aim the removal of the barrier of the dialects. The answer to the question whether popularization of the common speech means prohibiting or abolishing the dialects is definitely "No!" Dialects will exist for a long time. They cannot be prohibited by administrative order, nor can they be abolished by artificial measures. In popularizing the common speech, distinctions should be made between old and young people; between the activities on a national scale and those of a local nature; between the present and

the future. There should be no generalization. On the other hand, those who can speak only the common speech should learn the local dialects so that they will be able to make close contact with the working people in the districts where only local dialects are spoken.

It is an immensely difficult task to unify the dialects of the six hundred million Han people. To make it a reality, long and tireless efforts are required. Just how long it will take will depend upon how we work and how communications, economy and culture develop. But if we keep on working in earnest, we shall certainly fulfil our task. We should have such confidence. I hope we will all do more publicity work to create an atmosphere favourable to the popularization of the common speech. We should also, from time to time, arrange oratorical contests in the common speech, and give encouragement to those students who speak it well, and to those teachers who teach it well. In short, we should try more ways and means in our publicity work, change social atmosphere to facilitate the popularization of the common speech.

(3)

The third task is to draw up and popularize the Scheme for a Chinese Phonetic Alphabet. It should be made clear at the outset that the scheme is to annotate the characters phonetically and to popularize the common speech. It is not to replace the Chinese characters. Its first function is to give the pronunciation of these characters.

Are characters difficult to learn? Is the phonetic alphabet necessary to help in learning them? On these

questions views still differ. Some say the phonetic alphabet is not easy, but that some foreign languages also are difficult. On this question, each nation has to judge by its own standard. Chinese characters annotated with the phonetic alphabet are, of course, easier to learn than without annotation. As to foreign languages, if we begin to study them only after we have mastered Chinese through decades of effort, we shall feel it more difficult to learn than Chinese. It is always more difficult to learn the language of another nation than to learn the mother tongue. Russian is rather difficult to learn, but the Russian people feel it is easier than English or German. The question of whether it is easy or difficult to learn the phonetic alphabet is entirely different from the question of whether it is easy or difficult to learn a foreign language. The two should not be confused. I think we should admit that Chinese characters are difficult to read and write and therefore difficult to remember. Not only children beginning to learn characters, but some adults who have studied many years still do not know a number of characters or may mispronounce them. Now we simplify the number of strokes of the characters on the one hand, and, on the other hand, annotate them with a phonetic alphabet. These measures have the purpose of lessening the difficulty of reading and writing so as to enable the great mass of the people to master them more easily. That the efficiency of teaching and learning characters can be raised by using a phonetic alphabet has been proved by the experience of the quick method of learning characters in the past, and the method of teaching *zhuyin zimu* (phonetic transcript) practised in the primary schools at present. I hope that after the National People's Congress has approved the Scheme for

a Chinese Phonetic Alphabet,<sup>1</sup> annotation of the characters can be adopted in the language textbooks for primary schools and the textbooks for eliminating illiteracy in the districts where Northern dialects are spoken. It is certain that great advantages will accrue to the teaching of characters in the primary schools and the work of eliminating illiteracy.

The second function of the scheme is to transcribe the common speech, serving as a useful means of teaching and learning the common speech. In learning the common speech, listening and repeating are not enough. One easily forgets. To attain good results, it is necessary to have a set of phonetic symbols which can be used to compile phonetic reading material and pronouncing dictionaries so that learners may refer to them to correct their pronunciation. In the past, the lack of a universal and relatively satisfactory phonetic method has been a great handicap to the popularization of the common speech. Pending the final decision on the Scheme for a Chinese Phonetic Alphabet, the system of *zhuyin zimu* will continue to be in use. Although the latter has been in existence for forty years and was popularized in primary schools by governments in the past, it has been forgotten by most of its students. Now only a few people know the phonetic transcript. In future, we shall adopt the Latin alphabet for the Chinese phonetic alphabet. Being in wide use in scientific and technological fields and in constant day-to-day usage, it will be easily remembered. The adoption of such an alphabet will, therefore, greatly facilitate the popularization of the common speech.

<sup>1</sup>This scheme was later passed by the First National People's Congress at its fifth session on February 11, 1958.

The third function of the Scheme for a Chinese Phonetic Alphabet is to serve as a common basis on which the various minority nationalities in the country may create or reform their written languages. Of the nearly fifty nationalities in China, a large number still have no written language of their own. Some of them have written languages which need improvement. Among those nationalities having written languages, besides the Hans who have Han characters, there are the nationalities who use the Tibetan alphabet, Mongolian alphabet, Arabic alphabet, Korean Ŭnmun alphabet, or other kinds of alphabet. What kind of alphabet should be used as a basis when these minority nationalities create or reform their written languages? Can the Han characters be taken as a common basis for the written languages of the various nationalities? Such an attempt had been made, but it failed, proving that this was impractical. If each of the dozens of nationalities should adopt an alphabet of its own, it will hamper mutual learning and exchange of experience among them. It will also necessitate the making of different sets of printing, typing and telegraphic equipment which will adversely affect the development of culture and education of these minorities. Many nationalities have expressed the hope that they will adopt the same alphabet as the Han people to facilitate cultural exchange, the learning of the Han language and the adoption of Han terminology and technical terms.

A few years ago, indecision as to the kind of alphabet that should be adopted for the Han language had an adverse effect on the creation or reform of the written languages of some other nationalities. Now, about a score of nationalities in southwest China have created their own written languages based on the Latin alphabet. But they

do not feel assured because our scheme has not yet been finally decided. The Scheme for a Chinese Phonetic Alphabet should, therefore, no longer be delayed, or it will affect the plan of other nationalities. Since it has been decided to use the Latin alphabet as the Chinese phonetic alphabet, we should decide on a principle: that in future when the other nationalities create or reform their written languages, they should in principle take the Latin alphabet as the basis, and as much uniformity as possible should be attained with the Scheme for a Chinese Phonetic Alphabet in the pronunciation and use of the alphabet. It can be foreseen that the formulation of the scheme will greatly help the creation or reform of the languages of the minority nationalities, and increase mutual learning and contacts among the various nationalities.

The fourth function of the scheme is to help foreigners to learn Chinese and thus to promote international cultural exchange. As China's position in international affairs is rising with each passing day, more and more people, and primarily the people of our fraternal socialist countries and the friendly Asian and African countries, desire to learn Chinese. The chief difficulty they encounter is in learning the characters, and some feel that the task is almost hopeless. Now that we have a scheme for a phonetic alphabet, we can use this alphabet to compile textbooks, dictionaries and other reading materials for the people of other countries to learn Chinese. This will help them overcome difficulties. The special class for foreign students in Peking University has adopted the first draft of the scheme for a phonetic alphabet in teaching and learning, and has produced good results, showing that the scheme has its merits in this respect, and is far superior to the old method of learning the Han characters

and the early method of *zhuyin zimu* (phonetic transcript). When our foreign friends have mastered our spoken language, they can pursue their studies further in characters and written language by using this alphabet as a means of phonetic annotation. They will find it much easier than without a phonetic alphabet. This is the scheme's contribution to the promotion of international cultural exchange.

The scheme also has other uses. For example, it can be used to transliterate the names of foreign persons and places and scientific and technological terms and the names of Chinese persons and places in documents, books and newspapers intended for foreign readers, and to compile indices, etc.

It is not an exaggeration to say that, considering the uses we have listed, the formulation of the Scheme for a Chinese Phonetic Alphabet is a great event in the cultural life of the Chinese people.

Chinese written language has a history of roughly 3,500 years, counting from the time of the oracle bone inscriptions. Over this long span of time, the characters have undergone many changes: forms have been simplified, new characters added, and a part of the old characters have disappeared. The early characters were ideographs. Later there were phonetic ideographs — the form we mostly use today, but due to the gradual changes in pronunciation over the ages, the sound radicals of many phonetic ideographs lost their function of indicating the sound. For example, the character 江 (now pronounced “jiang,” meaning “river”) and the character 河 (now pronounced “he,” also meaning “river”) are no longer pronounced “gong” and “ke” as the ancients pronounced them. As Lu Hsun said, the characters “have become

ideographs which no longer resemble the forms, or phonetic ideographs which no longer indicate the sound.”

Since it is difficult to denote the pronunciation from the appearance of the characters, other methods had to be found. One of them is *zhiyin* (直音) which is to give pronunciation of a character by using another character of the same sound; in other words, the homophones mutually indicate the sound. This method often meets with difficulty. Another character of the same sound may not be found; or, if found, it may be an unfamiliar character which does not help in denoting the sound. Another method is *fanqie* (反切) which is phonetic transcription. In this method, the pronunciation of a character is denoted by means of two characters, the first with the same consonant and the second with the same vowel as the character annotated. *Fanqie* may be said to be the beginning of phonetics. However, as the pronunciation in different areas in China varies widely, the same two characters may be pronounced quite differently from one area to another. This further increases the possibility of divergence or error in either *zhiyin* or *fanqie*. Moreover, in either method, the prerequisite is an adequate vocabulary, which beginners, children or adults can hardly possess.

After the Revolution of 1911, *zhuyin zimu* (注音字母), a system of phonetic transcript, was introduced. This was the first phonetic alphabet formally promulgated by the government and popularized in the primary and secondary schools. This phonetic transcript made a certain contribution to the teaching and learning of characters and the standardization of pronunciation. In spite of its shortcomings, in the light of our present knowledge (its obvious inadequacy, compared with the Latin

alphabet, to serve as a common basis for the languages of the minority nationalities or as a means of promoting international cultural exchange), we should acknowledge its historical achievement. Also, *zhuyin zimu* played the role of a pioneer in the forty-year-old movement for a phonetic alphabet. One of the main functions of the present Scheme for a Chinese Phonetic Alphabet is to annotate pronunciation of characters. In this respect, the scheme is a successor to the traditions of *zhiyin*, *fanqie* and *zhuyin zimu* and has been built on their foundations.

Another aspect in the historical development of the Scheme for a Chinese Phonetic Alphabet is that the adoption of the Latin alphabet to annotate the pronunciation of characters dates back 350 years ago. In 1605, Matteo Ricci, an Italian Jesuit missionary in China, used the Latin alphabet to annotate the pronunciation of Chinese characters. In 1625, Nicolas Trigault, a French missionary, published a book entitled 西儒耳目資 *Xi Ru Er Mu Zi* (*A Guide for Western Scholars*) in which he described his method of annotating the pronunciation of characters with the Latin alphabet. They had their purpose in serving the needs of foreigners in the study of the Chinese spoken and written language. After the Opium War, more and more businessmen and missionaries came to China from the imperialist countries. To facilitate their learning of the Chinese language or to propagate their religion, they drew up various systems for a Chinese phonetic alphabet. Of these, the most popular were the Post Office System and the Wade System.<sup>1</sup> Systems for

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Francis Wade, an Englishman, drew up a phonetic alphabet for the Chinese language in 1867 which has been widely, almost generally, used by foreigners in transcribing Chinese, and is still in current use.

phonetic alphabets for the various local dialects were also drawn up, of which the alphabet for the southern Fukien vernacular (the phonetic system for Latinized Amoy dialect) had the largest influence. A great number of books were published using this system, which, as we know, is still understood by many people in and around Amoy, and still used by many in corresponding with their relatives living abroad. From 1892 onwards with the publication of *Qieyin Xinzi* 切音新字 (New Phonetic Alphabet) by Lu Chuang-chang, a considerable number of patriotic people actively sponsored the reform of the written language and introduced various phonetic systems. In 1926, Chien Hsuan-tung, Li Chin-hsi and Chao Yuan-jen (Y. R. Chao) drew up the Gwoyeu Romatzyh (National Romanized Writing) which was published by the then Ta Hsueh Yuan (Ministry of Education and Research) at Nanking in 1928. In 1931 appeared the Latinxua Sin Wenz (New Latinized Writing) framed by Chu Chiu-pai and Wu Yu-chang. The two last-mentioned systems were relatively complete systems of Latinized phonetic alphabets for the Chinese language devised by the Chinese themselves. In discussing the present scheme for a phonetic alphabet, we must acknowledge their contributions.

The Draft Scheme for a Chinese Phonetic Alphabet as now published has been developed on the basis of the old *zhiyin*, *fanqie* and various other phonetic systems. As far as the adoption of a Latin alphabet is concerned, its history may be traced back 350 years. The scheme may be said to be a summing-up of the sixty years' experience of the Chinese people in their efforts to devise a phonetic alphabet. It is really more comprehensive than any of the Latinized phonetic alphabets which existed in the past or

are still in current use. In February 1956, the Committee for Reforming the Chinese Written Language published the first draft scheme for a phonetic alphabet. Wide discussion of this scheme by people in different walks of life was organized by the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and by the committees of the local people's political consultative conferences. It was again and again examined, discussed and revised by the Committee for Examining and Revising the Scheme for a Chinese Phonetic Alphabet set up under the State Council. Having been considered at an enlarged meeting of the Standing Committee of the National Committee of the C.P.P.C.C. in October 1957, it was passed at the 60th Plenary Session of the State Council on November 1 of the same year. The State Council also decided to publish the scheme in the newspapers and prepared to submit it to the next session of the National People's Congress for discussion and approval. It is not difficult to see that the government takes a responsible and careful attitude towards this question. It has never been, as the rightist Chang Po-chun alleged, a matter carried through by a handful of persons behind closed doors and "discussed only by a few enthusiasts."

Will the adoption of the Latin alphabet in the Scheme for a Chinese Phonetic Alphabet be harmful to the patriotism of the Chinese people? Can we not devise an alphabet ourselves or continue to use the *zhuyin zimu* (phonetic transcript)? Beginning from 1952, the Committee for Reforming the Chinese Written Language spent nearly three years in an attempt to create an alphabet—including the revision of the *zhuyin zimu*. The attempt had to be given up as no satisfactory result could be obtained. The Latin alphabet was then adopted.

At present, more than sixty countries use the Latin alphabet as symbols for writing, including Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Albania, Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Rumania, Viet Nam, Indonesia and three Union members of the U.S.S.R.—Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. In adopting the Latin alphabet, these countries made necessary adjustments and improvements to suit the needs of their own national languages. So, the Latin alphabet has become each nation's own alphabet. In another respect, we can say that the Latin alphabet is a set of symbols of international usage, and no country can claim it as its own. We cannot say that Frenchmen use the English alphabet any more than we can say that Englishmen use the French alphabet. We can say only that Frenchmen use the French alphabet and the Englishmen use the English alphabet. Likewise, when we adopt the Latin alphabet, in which we make necessary adjustments to suit the needs of the Chinese language, it becomes the phonetic alphabet of our language and is no longer the alphabet of ancient Latin, still less the alphabet of any foreign country. An alphabet is a means of transcribing pronunciation. We make it serve us just as we make trains, steamships, automobiles and aeroplanes serve us. (And, from the point of origin, all these are imported.) It is also like using Arabic numerals for counting and calculating, the Gregorian calendar and the Christian era for recording the year, kilometres for measuring distance, and kilogrammes for measuring weight. The adoption of the Latin alphabet will, therefore, not be harmful to the patriotism of our people.

One remaining question with which we are all much concerned is the future of Chinese characters. We all

agree that as a written record they have made indelible contributions to history. As to whether or not they will remain permanently unchanged, whether they will change on the basis of their original forms, or whether they will be replaced by a phonetic language—Latin letters or other phonetic scripts—we need not draw a hasty conclusion. Any language is, however, subject to change, as evidenced by the changes of the characters in the past. There will be changes in future. We can also say that there will be a day when the languages—written and spoken—of the different peoples of the world will gradually be blended into one. The trend in the development of the languages of mankind is that they gradually approach one another until, at long last, there will be no wide difference. This is a good and not a bad anticipation. As to what scheme will be adopted, it is too early to conjecture. On the question of the future of the Chinese language, there may be various views. We can bring them out for discussion and debate. I shall not dwell upon it any further since it does not fall within the scope of the task of the language reform.

What has been described in the foregoing has to do with the three tasks in the current work of the reform of the written language which the government has been carrying out. We hope this work will receive the support of all. Language reform is a vital matter concerning the people of the whole country, on which the government takes well-considered measures. We are ready to hear the views of people in all walks of life so that we may collect useful suggestions and strive together to make this work a success. Any shortcoming will be corrected as soon as it is discovered—this is the policy of the Party and the government in doing any kind of

work, and so with the work of the language reform. In the past, our publicity work on language reform was unsatisfactory. Many people did not understand, or were confused about the question. We hope that all will join in the publicity work to remove the misunderstanding and will render active support and help to push ahead and not hold back this task. We hope that by so doing the Chinese written language will be steadily and vigorously reformed to enable the six hundred million Chinese people to shake off their backward cultural state and to achieve greater, faster, better and more economical results in building socialism.

**REPORT ON THE CURRENT TASKS OF REFORMING  
THE WRITTEN LANGUAGE AND THE  
DRAFT SCHEME FOR A CHINESE  
PHONETIC ALPHABET<sup>1</sup>**

**Wu Yu-chang**

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the Chinese Written Language*

Fellow Deputies:

The Draft Scheme for a Chinese Phonetic Alphabet is now submitted to the National People's Congress for discussion and approval. It was discussed by people of various walks of life throughout the country over a period of two years, and repeatedly examined and revised by the Committee for Examining and Revising the Scheme for a Chinese Phonetic Alphabet which was set up under the State Council. In October 1957, it was again discussed by the enlarged meeting of the Standing Committee of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and on November 1, 1957 adopted by the 60th Plenary Session of the State Council. On behalf of the Committee for Reforming the Chinese Written Language, I now submit a report on the current work of reforming the written language and the Draft

<sup>1</sup>Delivered at the fifth session of the First National People's Congress on February 3, 1958.

Scheme for a Chinese Phonetic Alphabet to the National People's Congress for examination and deliberation.

**I. CURRENT TASKS OF REFORMING THE WRITTEN  
LANGUAGE AND THE WORK DONE IN THIS FIELD  
DURING THE PAST FEW YEARS**

The current tasks of reforming the written language, as far as the Han people are concerned, are: (1) to simplify the Chinese (Han) characters to make them easier for the masses to master and to achieve greater, faster, better and more economical results in wiping out illiteracy, popularizing education and raising the cultural level among the masses; (2) to popularize the common speech (*putonghua*) so as to eliminate dialect barrier and bring about a further standardization of the Chinese language, so that it may serve China's socialist construction still better; and (3) to draw up and put into practice a scheme for a Chinese phonetic alphabet to annotate Chinese characters and help popularize the common speech.

The work of reforming the written language in the past few years has been carried on in accordance with the above policy.

I shall first deal with the task of simplifying the Chinese characters.

The government began research on simplifying Chinese characters immediately after liberation. The drafting of a scheme for simplifying Chinese characters started following the founding of the Research Committee for Reforming the Chinese Written Language in 1952. In January 1955, the Draft Scheme for Simplifying Chinese Characters was published by the Committee for Reforming the Chinese Written Language for the purpose of



soliciting opinions on an extensive scale. More than two hundred thousand people in various walks of life throughout the country took part in the discussions. This committee made a preliminary revision of the draft scheme on the basis of suggestions received. After the examination and revision by the Committee for Examining and Revising the Scheme for Simplifying Chinese Characters set up under the State Council, the draft scheme was submitted to, and discussed and adopted by, the National Conference for Reforming the Chinese Written Language in October 1955. In January 1956, the State Council published the Scheme for Simplifying Chinese Characters. This scheme falls into three parts: the first is a list of 230 simplified Chinese characters (that is, 245 complex characters were reduced to 230 simple characters; in some cases two or three complex characters were merged into one simplified character and the result is that after the simplification there are 15 characters less), which came into use from the time the scheme was published. The second is a list of 285 simplified Chinese characters (that is, 299 complex characters were reduced to 285; the simplification reduced the number by 14), of which 95 came into use on a trial basis since June 1956. The third is a list of 54 simplified radicals. Thirty characters coined from the radicals in this list came into use on a trial basis from the time the scheme was published. In all, the number of simplified characters now adopted by newspapers and magazines totals 355. Apart from these, there remain 190 simplified characters in the second list and the great majority of the characters coined from the simplified radicals in the third list which have not yet been put to use. But there are a few publications which use more than these 355 simplified characters.

For example, almost all the characters in the three lists have appeared in the textbooks on the Chinese language for primary schools and in the teaching materials for literacy classes.

Simplified forms of the Chinese characters appeared as early as the time of the oracle bone inscriptions, and in the centuries that followed simplified forms continued to develop. Our work is merely to carry on the simplification in a fairly systematic way and to make official these simplified forms. The advantages are obvious. The 544 characters which are simplified in the first and second lists of the Scheme for Simplifying Chinese Characters have in their original forms a total of 8,745 strokes or an average of 16.08 strokes a character. After being simplified, they are reduced to 515 characters with a total of 4,206 strokes, each character taking only 8.16 strokes on the average. That is to say, simplified characters can save half of the time and energy used in writing. Before the simplification there were in the lists only 34 characters with less than ten strokes and after the simplification the number rises to 409; characters with eleven strokes are 35 both before and after the simplification; and there were 475 characters with more than twelve strokes before the simplification, but the number is reduced to 71 after the simplification. If we further simplify the 515 simplified Chinese characters in the first and second lists according to the simplified radicals in the third list, it is estimated that the average strokes of each simplified Chinese character can be further reduced to 6.5 strokes or only 40 per cent of the average strokes of the original complex characters. The popularization of simplified characters greatly facilitates children's education, elimination of illiteracy, and writing in general.

This explains its appeal to the broad mass of the people, particularly the children and young people.

A number of rightists, taking advantage of the rectification campaign of the Communist Party, launched vicious attacks against the reform of the written language. They alleged that the simplification of Chinese characters was a failure and demanded that the State Council give up the Scheme for Simplifying Chinese Characters. The simplification of Chinese characters is a good thing which is in the interests of the broad mass of the people, and, as such, is bound to be rejected and slandered by the rightists who oppose the people. From the standpoint of the people's interests, we must say that the simplification of Chinese characters has rendered a valuable service to millions of children and illiterates, and that it has been a success, not a failure.

However, we must admit that there are some shortcomings in the work of simplifying the characters. Many comrades have put forward rational proposals for our consideration. To all those who have enthusiastically put forward their views we are much indebted. Over the past two years, facts have shown that we have not given sufficient consideration to some of the simplified characters, especially in the substitution of some characters by the simpler form of their homophones. They are either inappropriate or likely to cause ambiguity. For example, it is proper in most cases to substitute “隻” (*zhi* meaning a unit) with the simpler form “只” (also meaning *only*), which has been accepted as a popular form. A sentence like “許多船只通過蘇伊士運河” (*xuduo chuanzhi tong guo suyishi yunhe* meaning “many ships passed through the Suez Canal”) with this simplified form “只” in it may be misunderstood as “many ships *only*

passed through the Suez Canal.” Some other characters listed in the scheme have been misused as a result of insufficient explanation. For example, it is proper to simplify “徵收” (*zhengshou* meaning “to collect”) and “乾淨” (*ganjing* meaning “clean”) into “征收” and “干淨” respectively; but it is of course wrong to write “宮商角徵羽” (*gong shang jue zhi yu*, the names of five musical notes) as “宮商角征羽” (*gong shang jue zheng yu*), and to write “乾隆” (*Qian Long*, the name of an emperor's reign in the Ching Dynasty) as “干隆” (*Gan Long*).

The resolution adopted by the State Council on the publication of the Scheme for Simplifying Chinese Characters stipulates that the first list of 230 characters can be formally put to use, while suggestions on the second and third lists are still being gathered and no final decision has yet been made. We are also prepared to consider revising any of the characters in the first list found to be unsuitable. The Committee for Reforming the Chinese Written Language is now asking for opinions from all quarters, and studying and revising the scheme in the light of the experience we have gained in its trial use over the past two years.

But speaking as a whole, in the interests of the working people and the children and posterity, the work of simplifying the Chinese characters must be actively pushed ahead so that all the complicated, but commonly used characters can be gradually simplified. At present most of the simplified characters in the second and third lists have not yet been put into use. There are still many commonly used words such as “賽” (*sai*), “霸” (*ba*), “警” (*jing*), “爆” (*bao*), “整” (*zheng*), “翻” (*fan*), “藏” (*cang*), “徽” (*hui*), “辯” (*bian*), “疆” (*jiang*), “舞” (*wu*), “感” (*gan*), “影”

(ying), “鼻” (bi), “鼠” (shu), etc., which should be but have not yet been simplified. Many other characters used as names of places either involve a fairly large number of strokes or are rarely used and difficult to pronounce or both, such as “衢” (qu), “夔” (kui), “鄜” (fu), “鄂” (hu), “歙” (xi), “閩” (wen), “毫” (bo), “鄆” (juan), “婺” (wu), “夥” (yi), “鄴” (ling), “郴” (chen), “惇” (guo), and “盩厔” (zhouzhi). They must also be simplified, or substituted by more familiar homophones with less strokes. Some of these characters already have simplified forms used by the people and we may consider adopting them. Some have not yet a commonly used simple form and we may adopt simple forms for them on the basis of the suggestions from all quarters. After trial use for a certain period of time and when the forms are generally considered to be satisfactory, we can put them into formal use.

In short, the work of simplifying the Chinese characters is a great event for the people of the whole country. We must be careful and guard against rashness. We must adopt positive measures and continue our efforts in order to reap greater results. At present the broad masses eagerly welcome the simplified characters, but the number of them is not yet large enough to satisfy their urgent need — this is the main reason for a certain lack of inconsistency in the use of simplified characters. To avoid abuses and to remedy the lack of inconsistency, we should not let things drift. We must be active in our work of simplifying the Chinese characters. The simplified characters have been created by the people, so are the complex characters. They have undergone constant changes and development. The question is how to apply collective wisdom to the study, readjustment and

systematization of the characters — that is the work we should strive to do well.

Next, about the popularization of the common speech.

Of the total population in China nearly 600 million speak the Han language in various dialects. Each of these dialects includes many local patois. Over 70 per cent of the Han-speaking population talk in the Northern dialect. This shows the sharp diversity of dialects, above all, in pronunciation. On the other hand, there are favourable objective conditions for the gradual standardization of the spoken language. The basis for the further standardization is the common speech which takes the Peking pronunciation as standard and the Northern dialects as its basic form.

The common speech is the common spoken language of the Han people and, it may be said, of the people of all nationalities of our country. Today China has achieved a degree of unity and unification in her political, economic and cultural fields without parallel in history. United as one man, the people throughout the country are striving, under the leadership of the Party and the government, to attain the common goal of building socialism. They urgently need a common spoken language, without which they will meet with difficulties in their political, economic and cultural life. Therefore, it is an important political task to popularize the common speech vigorously among the people of the whole country.

Some progress has been made in the popularization of the common speech since the National Conference for Reforming the Chinese Written Language in 1955. Apart from the Central Working Committee for Popularizing the Common Speech working organizations have been set up in 22 provinces and municipalities. By the end of

1957, there were 721,600 teachers of primary, secondary and normal schools who had been trained in the phonetics of the common speech. Several million people learned the common speech and the phonetic alphabet for Chinese characters from radio broadcasts. Beginning from the autumn of 1956, the first-year pupils of primary schools all over the country as well as the secondary and normal school students in their language course have been taught the common speech. The result of teaching in the various regions speaking the dialects shows that we have definitely made progress and that the difficulties can all be overcome. To facilitate teaching and learning, preliminary dialect surveys have been carried out in most of the provinces and municipalities, and a good number of handbooks, based on the results of the surveys, have been compiled and published to help those who speak the dialects of the various regions to learn the common speech. More than five million copies of textbooks and other publications for the study of the common speech, compiled by the Ministry of Education, the Committee for Reforming the Chinese Written Language and the provincial and municipal organizations have been sold. The sale of gramophone records for teaching the common speech has topped the million mark. The training classes in the phonetics of the common speech, jointly conducted by the Ministry of Education and the Chinese Academy of Sciences, have trained over 550 people to form the core in the work of popularizing the common speech in various provinces and municipalities.

The experience of the past two years shows that, as long as the leadership attaches importance to the work of popularizing the common speech and carries it out in earnest, marked success can be scored even in such regions

as Chekiang, Kiangsu, Shanghai, Fukien and Kwangtung where the dialects differ substantially from the common speech.

To popularize the common speech does not mean to abolish dialects, which will continue to exist for a long time and cannot be wiped out arbitrarily. Dialects are also useful media of social intercourse. They serve the people of specific regions. But their use is confined to the regions concerned. Beyond this, instead of serving as media of social intercourse, they become an impediment to mutual understanding. Nor does the popularization of the common speech imply the prohibition of dialects. It is to enable those who speak dialects only to learn to speak, apart from their own dialect, a language common to the whole nation so as to facilitate their social intercourse with the people of other regions. We should vigorously popularize the common speech in schools of all levels, especially in the primary, secondary and normal schools. We should encourage the cadres, especially the local and young cadres of and above the district level, to learn the common speech. On the other hand, because dialects still play an important role in local activities, cadres who come from other places should energetically learn to speak the local dialects so as to be able to establish close contact with the masses and make a success of their work.

The popularization of the common speech should not and will not impair the constitutional right of the minority nationalities to use and develop their own languages. Naturally the common speech should be popularized primarily among the Han people. But at present many minority people have expressed the desire to learn

Han language. It is anticipated that following the adoption of the Scheme for a Chinese Phonetic Alphabet, an increasing number will study it with the help of this scheme. Thus the common speech can, and should, also be promoted among the minority people. Moreover, we should satisfy as far as possible the needs of all those who want to learn the common speech, for this will help strengthen the solidarity among the people of various nationalities and encourage them to learn from one another. It will serve the common interest of all the nationalities in China. On the other hand, every Han cadre who works in a minority area not only must respect the right of these nationalities to use and develop their languages, but also make efforts to learn them.

The popularization of the common speech is a long-term mass work and no unreasonable demands should be made as to the extent and speed of success. The popularization of the common speech with the Peking accent as standard in no way requires that everyone should speak exactly like Peking people. Such a demand is unreasonable and unnecessary. The Peking accent is a goal set for everyone, but in specific work the requirement should be different for different people. For example, radio announcers, stage and film actors and actresses should have the most accurate pronunciation, so should the language teachers in primary, secondary and normal schools, but people in general should not be so required. Nor should the same be required of children and youth as of the middle-aged. Anyone who endeavours to learn the common speech deserves popular respect, for he is earnestly undertaking a serious task. The committees for promoting the common speech and the educational

organizations in various places should hold regular common speech contests and foster emulation. Prizes should be awarded to those who distinguish themselves in teaching or learning the common speech. It is only under such conditions will people overcome their hesitations and have more confidence and interest in learning the common speech, and a popular movement for spreading the common speech be promoted.

At present, there still exists a tendency not conducive to the popularization of the common speech. For instance, some people sneer at, instead of encouraging, those who learn to speak the common speech. When children speak it at home, some parents rebuke them for "showing off their Peking jargon," or "forgetting their native tongue." These facts show that our poor publicity is responsible for the ignorance of many people with regard to the significance of the popularization. In order to rectify this social tendency and create conditions for the popularization of the common speech, we hope that our deputies will make vigorous efforts in publicity work among the people in all walks of life.

To teach and learn the common speech efficiently, it is necessary to have a phonetic alphabet for popular use. In the past, as the scheme for a Chinese phonetic alphabet had never been decided, certain difficulties arose in the popularization of the common speech. Now that the scheme is due to be finalized, and that this phonetic alphabet, which consists of Latin letters, will make it easy for those who speak dialects to learn the common speech by comparing the pronunciation with their own dialects, the work of popularizing the common speech will be made easier.

Now about the drawing up and carrying out of the Scheme for a Chinese Phonetic Alphabet.

It should be made clear at the outset that the adoption of a scheme for a Chinese phonetic alphabet does not mean the transformation of the Chinese written language into a phonetic language. The scheme will be used mainly to annotate the Chinese characters phonetically and transcribe the common speech as an aid in learning the characters, standardizing the pronunciation and teaching the common speech; in other words, the purpose is to facilitate the learning and use of the Chinese characters by the broad mass of the people and to promote further standardization of the Chinese language, and not to replace the characters with a phonetic alphabet.

On the questions as to whether the Chinese characters will for ever remain unchanged, or whether they will be reformed on the basis of the original characters or replaced by a system of phonetic symbols — Latin letters or other phonetic scripts — there is no need to come to a hasty conclusion at present. But one thing is certain: the Chinese characters are subject to change. This has been fully evidenced by their changes in the past. Like the languages of all other countries, the Chinese language will eventually become a phonetic language. We can also say that the languages, both spoken and written, of all nations in the world will some day become unified though gradually. But these questions are beyond the scope of the present scheme. We need not concern ourselves about them now.

About the process of drawing up the Scheme for a Chinese Phonetic Alphabet and its functions, I shall go into fairly great detail in the following.

## II. THE PROCESS OF DRAWING UP THE DRAFT SCHEME FOR A CHINESE PHONETIC ALPHABET AND ITS FUNCTIONS

Immediately after the Association for Reforming the Chinese Written Language was set up in Peking in October 1949, it started to work on schemes for a Chinese phonetic alphabet. In February 1952, the Research Committee for Reforming the Chinese Written Language was organized. Its main task, in addition to simplifying the characters, was to study the schemes for a phonetic alphabet. During a period of close on three years from February 1952 to the end of 1954, the committee was mainly engaged in studying and drawing up schemes based on our national form, that is, on the traditional form of Chinese characters. In December 1954, the Research Committee for Reforming the Chinese Written Language was reorganized into the Committee for Reforming the Chinese Written Language. Under this committee, a sub-committee known as the Committee for Drafting a Phonetic Alphabet Scheme was set up to make a more thorough and systematic study of the proposed scheme. In October 1955, four draft schemes based on the form of Chinese characters and two based on the alphabets generally used by other countries (one based on the Latin alphabet and the other on the Russian alphabet) were drawn up. These six schemes were distributed among the delegates to the National Conference for Reforming the Chinese Written Language, convened at that time in Peking, for their opinions. After this conference, it was decided, on the basis of the experience gained in the previous years, the opinions of the masses and the directives of the leadership, to adopt the Latin alphabet. In February 1956, the first draft

scheme for a Chinese phonetic alphabet was published, and opinions sought on it on an extensive scale. Besides being discussed at an enlarged meeting of the Standing Committee of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, this draft was discussed at meetings organized by the local people's political consultative conferences of 22 provinces, three municipalities directly under the central government, two autonomous regions, 26 municipalities under provincial authorities, four counties and one autonomous *chou*, with more than ten thousand persons taking part. Departments whose work was closely related to the use of the phonetic alphabet, such as the post and telegraphic services, the navy, railways and the education of the blind, held special discussions of varied sizes on this draft scheme. Besides, the Committee for Reforming the Chinese Written Language received from February to September 1956 more than 4,300 suggestions in writing from people of various walks of life in China and from overseas Chinese.

In accordance with these suggestions, our Committee proposed revisions to this draft scheme in August 1956 and submitted them to the State Council for examination. In October 1956, the State Council set up a Committee for Examining and Revising the Scheme for a Chinese Phonetic Alphabet. By October 1957, this committee had held five meetings and many discussions. It had also invited 178 representatives from the fields of linguistics, education, literature and art, the press, publications, science and technology, and translation, as well as from the armed forces and people's organizations in Peking, to hold discussions on this subject, and also sought, through correspondence, opinions from one hun-

dred linguists in 39 other cities. After repeated discussions, consultations and revisions, the committee submitted in October 1957 the revised draft scheme which, after discussion at an enlarged meeting of the Standing Committee of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, was passed at the 60th Plenary Session of the State Council on November 1, 1957 as the Draft Scheme for a Chinese Phonetic Alphabet. At this plenary session of the State Council, it was decided that the draft scheme be submitted to the National People's Congress for discussion and approval.

We must point out here that in drawing up the scheme we have also received assistance from over a thousand enthusiastic supporters of the phonetic scheme. During the period between 1949, when the Association for Reforming the Chinese Written Language was set up, and October 1957 we have received over 1,200 suggested schemes for a Chinese phonetic alphabet of different types from people in various parts of China and from overseas Chinese. Although most of them cannot be said to be well considered complete systems, a number of the ideas and suggestions threw new light on the problem and rendered us no small assistance. The completion of the present scheme is inseparable from the help of these thousand friends.

This has been the process of the drawing up of the Draft Scheme for a Chinese Phonetic Alphabet. Facts prove that this draft scheme was drawn up after long study by the specialists, repeated discussions and revisions by many people. It is a true reflection of the views of the great majority of those who took part in the discussions. The attitude of the government towards this question has been both conscientious and responsible

and it has taken careful steps. The contention of the rightist Chang Po-chun that this draft scheme was drawn up by a few behind closed doors and "discussed only by a few enthusiasts" is an obvious slander with ulterior motives.

Viewed from the history of the phonetic annotation of the Chinese language, the Draft Scheme for a Chinese Phonetic Alphabet has inherited the ancient Chinese traditions of *zhiyin* (直音) *fanqie* (反切) and *zhuyin zimu* (注音字母, phonetic transcript). It is a further development on the basis of these traditions. As Chinese writing is ideographic, it gives no indication of the sound of the words. That is why the question of phonetic annotation has arisen.

There are two traditional methods for denoting the sounds of characters. One is *zhiyin*, and the other is *fanqie*. The first gives the pronunciation of a character by using another character of the same sound. The defects of this method are exactly as described by Chen Li of the Ching Dynasty: "This method does not work when there is no available word of the same sound. Nor does it work when there is a word of the same sound but the word is itself unfamiliar and difficult to pronounce." The second method of phonetic transcription *fanqie* was introduced towards the end of the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.—A.D. 220). In this method, the pronunciation of a character is denoted by means of two characters, the first with the same consonant and the second with the same vowel as the character annotated. The merit of this method is that every sound can be transcribed, while its defects are its clumsiness and its lack of clarity to the general reader. Furthermore, as in the first method, readers cannot understand the pronunciation unless they possess a considerable vocabulary.

Following the Revolution of 1911 the *zhuyin zimu* was introduced. In this, one has only to master 37 phonetic symbols to be able to transcribe every word in the Peking dialect. This, of course, marked a big stride forward. But compared with the Latin alphabet, the phonetic script has flaws which will be difficult to remedy. First of all, it hardly has other uses except for annotating the Chinese characters, thus its popularization is difficult. On the other hand, the Latin alphabet is widely used in science and technology; it has many uses and is frequently met with in daily life, so once learned, it will not be easily forgotten. After adopting the *zhuyin zimu* the secondary school students in general still have to learn the Latin alphabet, but the adoption of the Latin alphabet will make it unnecessary for them to learn the *zhuyin zimu*. Furthermore, owing to the fact that some vowels in the *zhuyin zimu* are not phonetic letters, such a script is not so flexible as the Latin alphabet, as a foundation for creating written languages for national minorities, nor in transliterating foreign words. Thus the present Scheme for a Chinese Phonetic Alphabet, which adopts the Latin letters, is an improvement on the *zhuyin zimu*.

So far as the adoption of the Latin alphabet is concerned, the present scheme may trace its origin to over 350 years ago. As early as in the 33rd year of the reign of Wan Li of the Ming Dynasty, that is, in 1605, the first system for transcribing Chinese language with Latin letters came into being. It was followed by various Chinese phonetic systems based on the Latin alphabet. From the end of the 19th century onwards, many patriotic Chinese intellectuals came forward with suggestions for reforming the Chinese written language and formu-



lated systems for phonetic alphabets. Those who worked out Chinese phonetic systems based on the Latin alphabet included Lu Chuang-chang, Chu Wen-hsiung, Liu Meng-yang, Huang Hsu-pai, Hsing Tao and Liu Chi-shan. In 1926, the Gwoyeu Romatzyh (National Romanized Writing) was drawn up by Chien Hsuan-tung, Li Chin-hsi and Chao Yuan-jen (Y. R. Chao) and promulgated by the then Ta Hsueh Yuan (Ministry of Education and Research) at Nanking in 1928. Later, in 1931 Chu Chiu-pai and Wu Yu-chang devised the Latinxua Sin Wenz (New Latinized Writing). Among all these phonetic systems based on the Latin alphabet, the last two are relatively complete systems, much better than their predecessors. The present Scheme for a Chinese Phonetic Alphabet is developed on the basis of those of the past and embodies all their merits. It may be said to be the fruit of the movement for a phonetic alphabet over the last three centuries or so and a summary of the experience of the Chinese people in devising phonetic alphabets over the last sixty years.

Does the adoption of the Latin alphabet mean a lack of patriotism on our part? No, we can't say so. The Latin alphabet is now used by more than sixty countries. It is a set of common symbols which is indispensable to those being educated in algebra, geometry, chemistry or physics. Just as the Arabic numerals, the Gregorian calendar and the Christian era, the metric system of measures and weights and the musical staff have become the common property of mankind as a whole and do not belong to any particular nation, so with the Latin alphabet. The *huqin*, a Chinese fiddle (like the Latin alphabet, it was not created by the Han people), has become our national musical instrument because it suits

our needs. So will the Latin alphabet become our national alphabet because it suits our needs—and it has actually done so in our present scheme. It is to be used to spell pure Chinese—the common speech which takes the Peking pronunciation as standard. It will in no way affect the purity of our national spoken language and therefore will not run counter to our true patriotic feelings. This is only too obvious.

Now about the functions of the Chinese phonetic alphabet.

First, it can be used to give the pronunciation of the Chinese characters so as to raise the efficiency in learning and teaching Chinese characters. It may be used to annotate characters in the language textbooks for primary schools and for literacy classes in Northern-dialects regions, as well as in children's reading materials, picture books and popular publications. With the help of the alphabet, school children and illiterates can read books and newspapers and enlarge their vocabulary. In dictionaries and other reference books the alphabet should also be used as a guide to pronunciation. In books, magazines and newspapers in general, annotation may be made to unfamiliar characters or those which are easily mispronounced.

Secondly, the phonetic alphabet can be used as an aid in teaching and learning the common speech. To learn the common speech, hearing and repeating alone is not enough; one forgets quickly. Good results can be achieved by using a phonetic alphabet to compile textbooks, reading materials, charts and dictionaries in the common speech, which will serve the readers for reference purposes and verify their pronunciation. The phonetic alphabet is therefore an indispensable instru-

ment for teaching and learning the common speech. This has already been fully proved in the course of language teaching.

Thirdly, the phonetic alphabet can serve as a common basis on which various minority nationalities may create their written languages. To date many of China's nationalities still have no written language of their own. Some of them have written languages which need to be improved. If each nationality adopts an alphabet of its own, it will create difficulties in the supply of typing, printing and telegraphic equipment. This will adversely affect the development of culture and education of the various nationalities. After the Scheme for a Chinese Phonetic Alphabet is officially approved, it may be adopted, on the principle of voluntary choice, as a common basis for the minority nationalities to create their written languages. This will make it much easier for them to develop and enrich their written languages by absorbing words and phrases from the Han language, and for all the nationalities of our country to learn from one another and to promote their mutual contacts.

Fourthly, the alphabet can be used to solve the problem of transliterating the names of persons and places, and scientific and technological terms. As there is so far no formal Chinese phonetic alphabet, the phonetic transliteration of names of Chinese persons and places has followed the Wade System in documents and publications in foreign languages. This method is neither accurate nor reasonable. The adoption of the Scheme for a Chinese Phonetic Alphabet will solve this problem. The problem of transliterating names of foreign persons and places and scientific and technological terms may also be

solved properly step by step by making use of this alphabet.

Fifthly, it will help foreigners learn Chinese and thus promote international cultural exchange. With the steady rise in the international position of our country since liberation, more and more foreigners desire to learn Chinese. We can use this alphabet to compile various kinds of Chinese textbooks, reading materials and dictionaries to help them learn our spoken language, and the alphabet will also help them in their efforts to study our written language.

Sixthly, it can help solve the problem of compiling indices. Since the Chinese characters are not arranged in strict order, it takes a long time to compile a list, consult a dictionary or find a number in a telephone directory. The 26 Latin letters are arranged in fixed order. So all indexes, dictionaries, catalogues and cards as well as archives, reference materials and case history files may be compiled in alphabetical order, for easy reference. A simple method of finding words is necessary for every state and people's organization, school, factory and for individuals. The introduction of this alphabetical order will raise working efficiency and its advantages are obvious.

Seventhly, linguists can employ the Scheme for a Chinese Phonetic Alphabet in their further study of, and experiments in, the transformation of the Chinese written language into a phonetic language.

Apart from the obvious uses mentioned above, the Chinese phonetic alphabet can be employed in future to solve the question of telegraphic codes, flag signals and serial numbers on industrial products. The four-numeral telegraphic code in current use for Chinese characters

necessitates two deciphering procedures — one on despatching and another on receiving — and mistakes are apt to slip in. As regards flag signals, the use of Chinese characters is out of the question. With the adoption of the Scheme for a Chinese Phonetic Alphabet, the problems relating to telegraphic codes and flag signals by means of the phonetic symbols can be solved after study and experiment. Also there are a great variety of industrial products each having different specifications that must be represented by serial numbers. In the past, because of the absence of a phonetic alphabet, either *zhuyin zimu* or Russian or English letters were used for such serial numbers, which presented much confusion. The adoption of the present scheme will help to clear up such questions.

\* \* \*

From what has been said above, we can see that the Scheme for a Chinese Phonetic Alphabet not only has a historical background, but is urgently needed by the broad mass of our people today. An early decision on this scheme is eagerly awaited in the interests of literacy education, the popularization of the common speech and the creation of written languages for the minority nationalities. The present scheme has been studied by specialists over a long period of time, widely discussed by people in many walks of life throughout the country, and examined and revised during the past year. It is definitely better and more satisfactory than all its predecessors. Besides, it will be further improved when it is put to use. Therefore we hope that the Congress, after deliberations, will approve the scheme.

After the Congress has approved it, we hope that great efforts will be made to popularize it by stages on a nation-wide scale. In the first place, the new alphabet should be adopted as phonetic symbols for characters in the primary school language textbooks for the coming autumn term and also in the textbooks for literacy classes of the Northern-dialects regions, so that the difficulty in learning the characters may be reduced for illiterates and millions of children. We hope that our state and people's organizations at all levels will energetically encourage among their staff the use of the new alphabet in learning the common speech, thus setting an example in popularizing the common speech. The phonetic alphabet is easy to teach and learn. Generally it takes only twenty to thirty hours to master. For those who speak the common speech or who know something about phonetics it takes still less time. If vigorous efforts are made to popularize it, it is quite possible that all our students and a majority of the young and middle-aged people of our country will be able to use it during the period of the Second Five-Year Plan. This will greatly help press forward our work of teaching characters, wiping out illiteracy, standardizing pronunciation and popularizing the common speech, and contribute to raising the people's cultural level and speeding up our socialist construction. We hope that people of all walks of life will do all they can to make known the alphabet and promote its use.

## SCHEME FOR A CHINESE PHONETIC ALPHABET

### 1. THE ALPHABET

Letters	Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj
Wade System	a pe ts'e te ê ef ke ha i chieh
Letters	Kk Ll Mm Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt
Wade System	k'e el em ne o p'e ch'iu ar es t'e
Letters	Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz
Wade System	u ve wa hsi ya tse

V is used only to pronounce foreign and minority nationalities' words and local dialects. The written form of the letters follows the customary written form of Latin letters.

### 2. CONSONANTS

Consonants	Illustrative Chinese Characters	Wade System	Approximate English Equivalents
b	玻	p	b as in "be"
p	坡	p'	p as in "par," strongly aspirated

Consonants	Illustrative Chinese Characters	Wade System	Approximate English Equivalents
m	摸	m	m as in "man"
f	佛	f	f as in "food"
d	得	t	d as in "do"
t	特	t'	t as in "ten," strongly aspirated
n	訥	n	n as in "nine"
l	勒	l	l as in "land"
g	哥	k	g as in "go"
k	科	k'	k as in "kind," strongly aspirated
h	喝	h	h as in "her," strongly gutturalized
j	基	ch (i)	j as in "jeep"
q	欺	ch' (i)	ch as in "cheek"
x	希	hs (i)	sh as in "she"
zh	知	ch	j as in "jump"
ch	蚩	ch'	ch as in "church," strongly aspirated
sh	詩	sh	sh as in "shore"
r	日	j	r pronounced but not rolled, tending towards the z in "azure"
z	資	ts, tz	ds as in "deeds"
c	雌	ts'	ts as in "tsar," strongly aspirated
s	思	s, ss, sz	s as in "sister"

In annotating the Chinese characters, the letters zh, ch and sh may be simplified as  $\hat{z}$ ,  $\hat{c}$  and  $\hat{s}$ .

### 3. VOWELS

Vowels	Illustrative Chinese Characters	Wade System	Approximate English Equivalents
a	啊	a	a as in "father"
o	喔	o	aw as in "law"
e	鵝	ê	er as in "her," the r being silent
i	衣	i	ea as in "eat"
u	烏	u	oo as in "too"
ü	迂	ü	as German "ü"

Each vowel may be followed by other vowels or consonants to form the following diphthongs or finals:

#### Diphthongs

Diphthongs	Illustrative Chinese Characters	Wade System	Approximate English Equivalents
ia	呀	ia	yah
ua	蛙	ua	wah
uo	窩	uo	wa as in "water"
ie	耶	ieh	ye as in "yes"
üe	約	yüeh	no English equivalent
ai	愛	ai	as pronoun "I"
uai	歪	uai	wi as in "wife"
ei	欸	ei	ay as in "way"
uei	威	ui, wei	as "way"
ao	熬	ao	ow as in "how"
iao	腰	iao	yow as in "yowl"
ou	歐	ou	ow as in "low"
iou	憂	iu	yee oo

### Finals Ending in "N" or "Ng"

Finals	Illustrative Chinese Characters	Wade System	Approximate English Equivalents
an	安	an	ahn
ian	烟	ien	ien as in "lenient"
uan	弯	uan	oo ahn
üan	冤	yüan	no English equivalent
en	恩	ên	as "earn"
in	因	in	een as in "keen"
uen	温	wên	won as in "wonder"
ün	晕	yün	no English equivalent
ang	昂	ang	ahng
iang	央	iang	i ahng
uang	汪	uang	oo ahng
eng	the final as in "哼"	êng	no English equivalent
ing	英	ing	ing as in "sing"
ueng	翁	wêng	no English equivalent
ong	the final as in "轟"	ung	oo ng
iong	雍	yung	y oo ng

Note 1. Seven categories of syllables as represented by the characters 知, 蚩, 詩, 日, 資, 雌 and 思 take i as their vowel. They are spelt as zhi, chi, shi, ri, zi, ci and si respectively.

Note 2. The sound êrh is spelt er. As a final, it is represented by r. Thus: ertong (儿童 children), huar (花儿 flower).

Note 3. When used alone, the vowel e is spelt as ê.

Note 4. Y is used in syllables beginning with i when not preceded by consonants. Thus: yi (衣), ya (呀), ye (耶), yao (腰), you (憂), yan (烟), yin (因), yang (央), ying (英), yong (雍).

W is used in syllables beginning with u when not preceded by consonants. Thus: wu (烏), wa (蛙), wo (窩), wai (歪), wei (威), wan (彎), wen (溫), wang (汪), weng (翁).

Y is used in syllables beginning with ü when not preceded by consonants. In this case the two dots above u are omitted. Thus: yu (迂), yue (約), yuan (寬), yun (暈).

In syllables beginning with the consonants j, q and x, the two dots of ü are also omitted. Thus: ju (居), qu (區) and xu (虛). But in syllables beginning with the consonant n or l the two dots must be retained. Thus: nü (女), lü (呂).

Note 5. When preceded by consonants, iou, uei and uen are spelt as iu, ui and un. Thus: niu (牛), gui (歸), lun (論).

Note 6. In annotating the Chinese characters, the letters ng can be simplified as ŋ.

#### 4. TONE MARKS

To indicate tones, the following marks are used:

First tone	Second tone	Third tone	Fourth tone
—	/	∨	\
mā	má	mǎ	mà
媽 (mama)	麻 (hemp)	馬 (horse)	罵 (to scold)

The tone marks are put above the main vowels of syllables. When a syllable is neutral, no tone mark is called for. Thus: hǎo ma (好嗎 Is it good?)

#### 5. THE DIVIDING SIGN

When a syllable preceded by a, o or e immediately follows another syllable and is liable to run into the other and cause confusion, the dividing sign “ ’ ” is used. Example: pi'ao (皮袄 fur coat); without the sign it is piao (漂 to float).

### RESOLUTION OF THE NATIONAL PEOPLE'S CONGRESS ON THE SCHEME FOR A CHINESE PHONETIC ALPHABET

*Adopted by the Fifth Session of the First National  
People's Congress on February 11, 1958*

Having discussed the Motion on the Draft Scheme for a Chinese Phonetic Alphabet submitted by Chou En-lai, Premier of the State Council, and the Report on the Current Tasks of Reforming the Written Language and the Draft Scheme for a Chinese Phonetic Alphabet delivered by Wu Yu-chang, Director of the Committee for Reforming the Chinese Written Language, the First National People's Congress, at its fifth session, resolves: 1. that the Scheme for a Chinese Phonetic Alphabet be approved; 2. that it agrees in principle with the Report on the Current Tasks of Reforming the Written Language and the Draft Scheme for a Chinese Phonetic Alphabet delivered by Wu Yu-chang. Congress is of opinion that the simplification of the Chinese characters be continued; that the common speech be actively popularized; that the Scheme for a Chinese Phonetic Alphabet, as an aid in learning the Chinese characters and popularizing the common speech be taught first of all in normal, secondary and primary schools to gain experience, while gradually applying it in publications and other fields, and, from the experience and results in these fields, efforts be made to attain its further improvement.

**RESOLUTION OF THE STATE COUNCIL ON THE  
PROMULGATION OF THE DRAFT SCHEME  
FOR A CHINESE PHONETIC ALPHABET**

*Adopted by the 60th Plenary Session of the State  
Council on November 1, 1957*

During the two years since it was put forward by the Committee for Reforming the Chinese Written Language, the Draft Scheme for a Chinese Phonetic Alphabet has been submitted to extensive discussions organized by the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and local consultative committees, and examined and revised by the Committee for Examining and Revising the Scheme for a Chinese Phonetic Alphabet which was set up under the State Council. After examination and discussion at an enlarged meeting of the Standing Committee of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, it was passed at the present plenary session of the State Council. At this session, it was decided that the draft be submitted to the next session of the National People's Congress for discussion and approval, and be issued to the press for the people of the whole country to be acquainted with beforehand.

The adoption of the Scheme for a Chinese Phonetic Alphabet for the purpose of annotating the Chinese characters so as to make Chinese easier to learn and help standardize pronunciation will act as an impetus to our

work of improving the teaching and learning of the Chinese language in schools, popularizing the common speech and wiping out illiteracy. It is also of great importance to our various minority nationalities in creating their written languages and learning the Han language. Therefore, after being discussed and approved by the National People's Congress, this draft may be popularized by stages in normal, secondary and primary schools, continuation schools for adults, literacy education and publications, while efforts should be made to further improve it in actual work. Specific methods for this shall be, with the participation of the Committee for Reforming the Chinese Written Language, worked out respectively by the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Culture and other institutions concerned, and reported to the State Council for approval and implementation.

**A SUMMARY OF THE EFFORTS OF THE CHINESE  
PEOPLE OVER THE PAST SIXTY YEARS  
TO CREATE A PHONETIC ALPHABET**

**Wu Yu-chang and Li Chin-hsi**

The promulgation of the Draft Scheme for a Chinese Phonetic Alphabet is a great event in the cultural life of the Chinese people. When it is popularized among the broad masses, the alphabet will produce a profound effect on our culture and education, and contribute to the speeding up of our socialist construction.

Attempts to create a phonetic alphabet have been made by the Chinese people in the past sixty years and more. From the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95 to the Revolution of 1911 was the period of *Qieyinzi Yundong* (Movement for a Phonetic Alphabet) in the history of the reform of the Chinese written language. During this period, many patriotic Chinese came forward with suggestions for reforming the written language and formulated systems for phonetic alphabets. Chief among these were the *Qieyin Xinzi* (New Phonetic Alphabet) invented by Lu Chuang-chang in 1892; the *Chuanjin Kuaizi* (Phonetic Speedy Writing) by Tsai Hsi-yung in 1896; the *Shengshi Yuanyin* (The Best Alphabet for the Golden Age) by Shen Hsueh in 1896; the *Pingyin Zipu* (The Phonetic Alphabet) by Wang Ping-yao in 1896; the *Guanhua Zimu* (An Alphabet for Mandarin Chinese) by

Wang Chao in 1900; the *Hesheng Jianzi* (Simplified Phonetic Symbols) by Lao Nai-hsuan in 1905; the *Jiangsu Xin Zimu* (New Alphabet of Kiangsu) by Chu Wen-hsiung in 1906; the *Zungkuo Yinbiaozi* (The Chinese Phonetic Alphabet) by Liu Meng-yang in 1908. The *qieyin zi* (phonetic alphabet) in the closing years of the Ching Dynasty can in the main be divided into two schools according to the form of the letters, one advocating the adoption of Latin letters, the other the creation of a new alphabet. The latter consists of several systems such as *suji* (shorthand), *jiaming* (kana), *zhuanwen* ("seal" script), *caoshu* ("running" characters) and *xiangshu* (diagram-numeral). Among the different alphabets, those proposed by Wang Chao and Lao Nai-hsuan were widely used in certain places in their times. Following the Revolution of 1911, the *zhuyin zimu* (phonetic transcript) was introduced in 1913 by the Association for Standard Pronunciation and officially promulgated in 1918 by the then Ministry of Education. The introduction of the *zhuyin zimu* marked a big stride forward in the phonetic annotation of the Chinese characters. At one time it was popularized in primary and secondary schools (at present, as the Scheme for a Chinese Phonetic Alphabet has not been finalized, it is still used to annotate characters in the textbooks on the Chinese language for primary schools), and had contributed greatly in helping people to read and write and in standardizing the pronunciation of the spoken language. In 1926, the Gwoyeu Romatzyh (National Romanized Writing) was drawn up by Chien Hsuan-tung, Li Chin-hsi and Chao Yuan-jen (Y. R. Chao) and promulgated by the then Ta Hsueh Yuan (Ministry of Education and Research) at Nanking in 1928. Later, in 1931, Chu Chiu-pai and Wu



Yu-chang devised the Latinxua Sin Wenz (New Latinized Writing). Among all these phonetic systems based on the Latin alphabet, the last two are relatively complete systems devised by the Chinese themselves and are far better than their predecessors, and all the systems for the various Chinese dialects devised by Western missionaries, the widely used Wade System and the Post Office System. While the deficiency of the Gwoyeu Romatzyh lies in its complicated methods of indicating tones, that of the Latinxua Sin Wenz is the absence of tone mark. The Latinxua Sin Wenz was once put into trial use among Chinese nationals living on the Far Eastern border of the Soviet Union and in the Shensi-Kansu-Ningsia Border Region and the liberated areas behind the Japanese lines during the War of Resistance Against Japan.

The present Draft Scheme for a Chinese Phonetic Alphabet promulgated by the State Council may be said to be a summary of the experience of the Chinese people in devising a phonetic alphabet over the past sixty years. Because the Latin alphabet is the most widely used alphabet in the world, we have adopted it instead of following the *zhuyin zimu* or devising a new alphabet. As the Latin alphabet is used by more than 600 million people in the world, our present scheme, which adopts Latin letters, will go a long way towards promoting the cultural exchange between the Chinese people and the peoples of other countries. In 1906, Chu Wen-hsiung, who invented the New Alphabet of Kiangsu, said: "It is better to adopt a universally used alphabet than to devise a new one." These words still hold true today. The present Draft Scheme for a Chinese Phonetic Alphabet is definitely an improvement on all those phonetic

systems based on the Latin alphabet devised in the past, including the Gwoyeu Romatzyh and the Latinxua Sin Wenz. It has followed the fine traditions of those of the past while remedying defects in every possible way. The fact that it uses b, d and g to represent the unvoiced consonants 玻 (bo), 得 (de) and 哥 (ge) is a clear illustration of its inheriting the tradition common to the Gwoyeu Romatzyh and the Latinxua Sin Wenz. It has also inherited another merit of the Latinxua Sin Wenz that the two groups of sounds as the dental palatal zh, ch, sh (知, 蚩, 詩) and the dental alveolar z, c, s (資, 雌, 思) are clearly shown as symmetrical, both taking i as their vowel. In the method of indicating tones, it follows the tone marks used by the *zhuyin zimu*, avoiding the complicated method of the Gwoyeu Romatzyh. In a word the present draft is definitely better and more satisfactory than all its predecessors, and is, in a measure, akin to the few systems which are still being widely used. Since the first draft of the Scheme for a Chinese Phonetic Alphabet was published in February 1956 by the Committee for Reforming the Chinese Written Language, it had been widely discussed by people in various walks of life throughout the country. After repeated examination and revision by the Committee for Examining and Revising the Scheme for a Chinese Phonetic Alphabet under the State Council, the State Council approved and promulgated it and decided to submit it to the next session of the National People's Congress for discussion and approval. During discussions over almost two years, people in various walks of life put forward from different angles many valuable suggestions and demands. In accordance with these suggestions and demands, revisions were made by the Committee for Re-

forming the Chinese Written Language and the Committee for Examining and Revising the Scheme for a Chinese Phonetic Alphabet. But it is admitted that it is impossible for the scheme to answer all the demands and satisfy everyone. On the other hand, as it is a true reflection of the views of a great majority of those who took part in the discussions, we believe that the present draft is relatively satisfactory and feasible. We hope that the National People's Congress, at its next session, will give the scheme its approval, so as to satisfy the urgent needs of people of various walks of life throughout the country for a phonetic alphabet.

After Congress has approved it, we think the scheme should gradually be put into general use in the following manner:

Firstly, the phonetic alphabet should be taught in primary, secondary and normal schools. We hope that it will be used as phonetic symbols for new characters in the first volume of the primary school textbooks on the Chinese language for the autumn term of 1958. As it is estimated that by the autumn term of 1958 not all the teachers who teach the Chinese language of the first-year form of the primary schools throughout the country will be able to master the alphabet, it can be taught first in certain key localities and then gradually put into general use in 1959. Starting from the autumn of 1958, the teaching of the alphabet can be carried out on a large scale among first-year students of the secondary and normal schools all over the country.

Secondly, as an aid in wiping out illiteracy, the alphabet should be taught among adults in the cities and rural areas speaking the common speech. We hope that, beginning next year, the educational departments will

make vigorous efforts to train a number of people to form the core in the work of popularizing the alphabet; to teach the alphabet to cadres engaged in spare-time and literacy education as well as to teachers of spare-time schools and literacy classes in cities. They should also conduct experiments in teaching the alphabet in certain factories and agricultural producers' co-operatives where conditions are favourable. Beginning in 1959, experiments in teaching the alphabet should first of all be carried out in certain key cities and counties in areas speaking the common speech, and then gradually popularized until the young and middle-aged people and secondary and primary school students throughout the country have learned to use it.

Thirdly, the alphabet should be popularized in publications and translations. It should be widely used in the compilation of various kinds of textbooks, charts and reference books, a start to be made in publishing reading material in which the alphabet is printed alongside the characters as phonetic symbols on the one hand, and, on the other, the characters are spelt out alphabetically. Dictionaries should be compiled in alphabetical order in which the alphabet is used as a guide to pronunciation. The alphabet may also be gradually used to annotate the characters in popular publications and picture-story books. To promote the work of annotating characters, we hope that the publishing departments will as early as possible devise new type founts on which the Chinese characters are accompanied by the alphabet. The phonetic transliteration of names of Chinese persons and places by Latin letters has followed the old systems in publications in foreign languages, broadcasting, postal and telecommunications services to foreign countries and

diplomatic documents. It is unreasonable to continue the old systems. The new scheme should be introduced.

Fourthly, the alphabet should be put into trial use in the telegraph service. Latin letters have for many years been used in the telegraph service of Northeast China's railways, but they had not been popularized in the railways of the rest of the country, as the Draft Scheme for a Chinese Phonetic Alphabet had not been decided on. We hope that the postal and telecommunications departments will study this problem, devise as early as possible a new telegraph code with the letters spelt out alphabetically, put it into trial use and, when good results have been established, gradually put it into general use.

Fifthly, the alphabet should be popularized in public places. It should be used alongside the characters written on signboards used on railways and highways, indicating streets, stations or bus stops, wharves, hospitals, banks, post offices and other public places. It can also be gradually used alongside the titles of newspapers and magazines and characters written on the signboards of government offices and people's organizations.

Sixthly, as the alphabet will make Chinese much easier to learn, it should be used to help China's many minority nationalities and foreigners to study the Han language. It should also be used to compile textbooks, dictionaries and reading materials for their use.

Seventhly, the Scheme for a Chinese Phonetic Alphabet may serve as a basis on which various minority nationalities may create their own written languages. In creating or reforming their written languages the minority nationalities should, in principle, adopt Latin letters and use the scheme as a common basis. The pronunciation of the letters and their usage should be unified as

much as possible, as this will make it easier for all the nationalities of our country to learn from one another and to promote social contacts.

Eighthly, linguists should make further research into the scheme. When it has been promulgated, they should go on with their research and experiments so as to continually improve it in the course of practice. The use of this scheme regarding teaching programmes and methods, methods of indicating tones, the combination of characters to form words, the transliteration of foreign words and the annotation of dialects should also be the object of research and experiment.

We think that the above are the chief tasks which should be tackled when the Scheme for a Chinese Phonetic Alphabet is finalized.

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