

Foreign Languages: Too Little, Too Late?

Today the intensive study of modern languages is an imperative in the free world. For more than ten years now Americans have been hearing pleas by eminent educators, scientists, and government officials for an accelerated language training program. In its customary way the government has appropriated millions for language scholarships and language training centers across the nation. In general the public has responded about as well as one could expect. The enrollment in Western European language courses has increased, and in some areas an enlightened public has demanded that language training courses be made available. However, these manifestations are not enough. We need a larger reservoir of students who have had language training as a part of their regular elementary, secondary and higher education. Last year, according to an article in the *Wall Street Journal*, not one student applied for a tuition-and-subsistence scholarship to study Quechua, a language in which the Russians were daily broadcasting to four million natives in Peru and Ecuador.

Recently Dr. Edward Teller, nuclear physicist, expressed our plight in clear and sober terms to the students and faculty of Brigham Young University: "There are few countries," he said, "where foreign languages are spoken by as few as in our own country. In two important, vital fields of education—in science education and in the teaching of languages—we are lagging. And these shortcomings may cause our downfall." What do we do now? The answer is clear: we must make available and attractive Western European and exotic language and science courses on all academic levels and require all capable students to enroll in them. College administrators, superintendents of schools, school boards, and principals everywhere have the duty and the responsibility to act now in this national crisis. By the time an aroused public demands universal science and language training to accompany "universal" military service, it may be too late.

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