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CONDITION AND PROSPECTS OF THE WORK ON ORTHOGRAPHY
AND TRANSCRIPTION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES IN THE
PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA

(Submitted by the Government of the People's
Republic of Bulgaria)

In the People's Republic of Bulgaria the theoretical and practical problems of transcription and orthography of geographical names have been tackled chiefly by two centres: the Institute of Bulgarian Language at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, and the Central Administration of Geodesy and Cartography.

In the Institute of Bulgarian Language at the Academy of Sciences for a number of years profound studies on Bulgaria's toponymy have been carried on. Theoretical questions regarding the transcription of foreign geographical names have also been treated.

At the Chief Administration of Geodesy and Cartography work has been carried on for many years on specifying the toponymy of Bulgaria with a view to issuing accurate maps of the country and transcribing a large number of geographical names in other countries. Work on the transcription of foreign geographical names has been performed mainly for the needs of small-scale cartography, which uses the greatest number of transcribed geographical names.

By decision of the Council of Ministers of the People's Republic of Bulgaria, the Council of Orthography and Transcription of Geographical Names was set up in 1964. The Council is established under the Chief Administration of Geodesy and Cartography, but it operates as an extra-departmental body, and its decisions are

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obligatory for institutions and organizations. This is a proof of the fact that the problems of transcribing foreign geographical names, arising from immediate practical needs, find a most favourable response on the part of the highest state bodies in our country and the widest Bulgarian cultural circles.

The Council attains its goals by its highly representative composition. Included in it are representatives of a number of academic institutions (of the Bulgarian Language, of History, of Balkanistic Studies, the Geographical Institute, etc.), of the Sofia University, of a number of ministries, of the cartographical organizations in Bulgaria, etc. It is a widely established practice to draw specialists in the different languages as critics of the different works.

The Council of Orthography and Transcription of Geographical Names has as its task the unification of orthography and transcription of geographical names with a view to establishing their correct transcription and use in cartographic works, the press, radio, etc.

To attain its goals, the Council publishes lists of transcribed geographical names of foreign countries, specifying the transcription of the different geographical names in Bulgaria's territory and how they should be spelled out in the maps. The lists of transcribed geographical names and the instructions issued by the Council serve as bases for unifying the transcription and orthography of geographical names by all state bodies in Bulgaria.

Proceeding from the fact that the demands of cartography for transcribed geographical names are the greatest, these demands determine the total amount of transcribed geographical names. Thus, while meeting the demands of cartography, we meet also all other needs (of the press, radio, publishing houses, etc.). The volume of the work done is also determined by a second, regional feature, which takes into consideration the substantially higher demands for the neighbouring countries with which, naturally, our cultural, economic and political contacts are considerably greater.

For the country's territory, the Council has agreed to work with such a number of geographical names as are needed for the making of maps on a scale of 1 : 5,000; for the countries of the Balkan Peninsula on a scale of 1 : 500,000; for the European countries on a scale of 1 : 1,000,000; and for all other countries on a scale of 1 : 2,500,000.

In the transcription of geographical names, the Council is guided by the principle of the exact phonetic rendering of foreign names with the means and possibilities of the Bulgarian language, while observing the basic rules of Bulgarian orthography and Bulgarian literary pronunciation. Moreover, we think that the endeavour, by means of our language to render the phonetics of the officially adopted language of the corresponding country, which is spoken by the bulk of its population, is a correct principle, corresponding to the needs of actual cultural exchanges between nations.

The attainment of the goals in connexion with the establishment of an exact transcription of geographical names is impossible without a steady and fruitful contact between nations, which can be expressed as follows:

- (1) Supply of original material for the toponymy of the countries;
- (2) A steady exchange of experience (scientific symposiums, mutual publications, studies, etc.);
- (3) Reciprocal revision of the work or the transcription of geographical names, and
- (4) The organizing of a periodical publication to throw light on the theoretical problems connected with the transcription of geographical names.

In this respect we fully support the stand of the group of experts, to the effect that regional conferences should be organized for exchanges of experience.

For our part, we think that a special examination and discussion of the problems regarding the unification of transcription of geographical names is also necessary for the purposes of cartography, which is the most important mass popularizer of geographical names among a wide circle of readers. In solving this problem a number of questions arise, which involve the competency of linguists, geographers and cartographers. A very positive example in this respect is the making of an international map of the world on a scale of 1 : 2,500,000, which is being elaborated with the joint efforts of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the German Democratic Republic, the Hungarian People's Republic, the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, the Polish People's Republic, the Socialist Republic of Romania and the People's Republic of Bulgaria.

The information about the work done in our country would be incomplete if we do not mention its volume and scope. In the last two and a half years the Council has examined and approved 11 lists of transcribed geographical names of Europe and America. In the course of this work, the Council has specified a number of principles in connexion with the organizational methods of its work (preliminary revision and discussion of the lists to be approved, etc.), as well as questions regarding the principles for the transcription of geographical names (the problem about traditional names, the terms of geographical nomenclature, the rendering of the peculiarities of different languages by the Bulgarian orthographic system, etc.).

The work done so far describes pretty accurately the circle of problems which our Council tackles, and is a necessary prerequisite for generalizing the accumulated experience, because names have been transcribed from various families of languages. Such generalization for its part is a theoretical basis for further practical work in the transcription of new names from other kindred languages.

There is no doubt that the initiative of the United Nations for help and unification in the work of the national councils of orthography and transcription of geographical names can play a most beneficial role on our work as a result of which we lend it our wholehearted support.

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