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THE PINYIN SYSTEM - SYSTEM OF THE TRANSCRIPTION OF
CHINESE CHARACTERS IN ROMAN LETTERS

Paper submitted by the Government of the
Czechoslovak Socialist Republic

Czechoslovak Socialist Republic

**The Pinyin System
System of the Transcription
of Chinese Characters in Roman Letters**

**(The viewpoint of the Czechoslovak delegation
to the suggest of the Hungarian delegation)**

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The Pinyin System: System of the Transcription of Chinese
Characters in Roman Letters

(To the suggest of the Hungarian delegation)

In 1958, the People's Republic of China accepted a system known as "Pinyin" for the transcription of the Chinese language in Roman characters.

There are no Chinese examples of the use of this system in mapping practice; China has not so far compiled any maps with Roman lettering. Yet, the Pinyin system is used in journalistics, transport, bibliography, etc.

In the last years, the Pinyin system has been applied in a number of foreign maps. They are, for example: Grosser Bertelsmann Weltatlas Gütersloh, 1961), Politischer Weltatlas (Budapest, 1961), Map of China (Budapest - Stockholm, 1967), The International Atlas (Chicago, 1969), Gran Atlas Aguilar (Madrid, 1969), the World Map 1:2,500,000 (Sofia - Praha - Leipzig - Budapest - Warszawa - București - Moskva, 1962 to 1972).

The Pinyin system is based on the present Pekingese dialect. The precise phonetics of this dialect had been thoroughly investigated by sinologists, and implemented in 1918 in the Zhuyin zimu (Chu-yin-tzu-mu) transcription, which, though reminding Chinese characters, was made of letters, and later on (Shanghai, 1937) in the Cihai dictionary (Tz'u-hai). Also the Wade-Giles system is based on the same transcription. Therefore all Chinese characters can be easily transcribed in the Pinyin system provided they are rendered in some dictionaries in the

Zhuyin-zimu or Wade-Giles systems.

There is also a special transcription dictionary, *Hanzi Pinyin Jianzi, Xin Zhishi Chubanshe* (Shanghai, 1958), which contains more than 6,000 characters transcribed in the Pinyin system. If we compare these characters to those found in the Chinese atlas (*Zhonghua Renmin Gogheguo Dituji*, Shanghai, 1957), comprising about 16,000 names, we can find that only about three per cent of the names cannot be transcribed. Hence, the transcription of the Chinese language in the Pinyin system cannot be more difficult than that of other languages using non-Roman letters.

Viewpoint:

With regard to the undeniable advantages of the Pinyin system, as expressed by D.H. Talbot (Hongkong) "the Pinyin system distinguishes and expresses the Chinese sounds better than any other transcription system", as well as with regard to the fact that every country has a right to decide about the way of handling her names abroad, the Czechoslovak delegation is in full favour of the acceptance of the suggestion of the Hungarian delegation which concerns the use of the Pinyin system for the transcription of Chinese geographical names, even though Chinese names have so far been brought here in the transcription system laid down by Czech sinologists in 1952.

The Czechoslovak delegation considers the suggestion fully recommendable for further implementation.