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STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES
London, 10-31 May 1972
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REPORT ON PROGRESS IN THE STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL
NAMES IN THE GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC */

Paper submitted by the Governments of the
Czechoslovak Socialist Republic and of the
Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

*/Paper prepared by the Council of Minister of the German Democratic Republic. Ministry of the Interior. Administration for Surveying and Cartography.

On the occasion of the Second United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names scheduled for 10th to 31st May, 1972, in London, Great Britain, the following report is submitted on the progress made in the standardization of the spelling of geographical names in the German Democratic Republic since the First United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names held in September, 1967, in Geneva Switzerland:

1. The commission for the spelling of geographical names on maps, which is attached to the Council of Ministers of the German Democratic Republic, Ministry of the Interior, Administration for Surveying and Cartography, has made use of the recommendations given at the First United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names in September, 1967, in Geneva, Switzerland, for its own activities.

The commission for the spelling of geographical names on maps acts as an advisory body to the head of the Administration for Surveying and Cartography with regard to basic questions of the spelling of geographical names on maps compiled in the GDR. Its members are representatives of State authorities, cartographic enterprises and scientific institutions. Its task is to lay down the principles for a standardized spelling of geographical names on maps published in the German Democratic Republic.

The commission submits recommendations for the transliteration of geographical names to be rendered from non-Roman letters, works out suggestions for principles to be followed in the transliteration of names, and suggests the application of transliteration systems and rules applicable in exceptional cases.

In laying down the principles of the spelling of geographical names, the commission sees its special task not only in safeguarding its own national interests but to the same extent in taking into account the interests of other peoples as well.

The principles governing the activities of the commission have been set forth in the GDR report submitted on the occasion of the First United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names held in Geneva, 1967. The documents worked out by the commission are confirmed by the Head of the Administration for Surveying and Cartography after having been thoroughly discussed, and thus become binding.

2. Allowing for the resolution adopted at the First United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, which concerned the national standardization (resolution 4), the commission for the spelling of geographical names on maps has revised the "General Directions for the Spelling of Geographical Names in the German Democratic Republic", 2nd edition, Berlin 1970, and has considerably supplemented and extended this 2nd edition as compared with the 1st one. This new edition has a wide range of application.

These General Directions contain the most important names of mountain ranges, peaks, lakes, rivers, regions etc. on the territory of the German Democratic Republic. As to the spelling of the names of localities the "Dictionary of Localities of the German Democratic Republic", Berlin, 1970, is binding. In accordance with Article 40 of the Constitution of the German Democratic Republic, geographical names in areas inhabited by citizens of Sorbian nationality shall be given in both languages. The spelling of these names is laid down in the "Register of Localities in the Bilingual Districts of the Dresden and Cottbus Counties", Bautzen.

Furthermore, a fourth revised edition of the "Regulations for the Spelling of Geographical Names on Maps Compiled in the German Democratic Republic", Berlin, 1972, has been published.

These Regulations are the binding document with regard to the standardized spelling of geographical names on all maps published in the GDR. At the same time, they are a major aid for all those holding responsible positions in the publishing trade, in press, radio and television of the GDR, and are also used in many State bodies and institutions. The Regulations contain general directions for the spelling of geographical names; rules concerning the transliteration of foreign-language names for States using Roman letters as well as for States using non-Roman letters; rules applicable in exceptional cases; a list containing the spelling of the names of States as well as of dependencies and other territories; the German spelling of the names of towns, mountain ranges, regions, peninsulas, islands, rivers, lakes, seas and parts thereof, submarine relief forms, and a selection of abbreviations of other States that are in current use.

For a number of European States "General Guidelines for the Spelling of Geographical Names" have been published. These Guidelines include information on the documents that fix the spelling of names on maps; general rules for the spelling of geographical names; rules applicable in exceptional cases; generic names as well as registers of geographical names. A register of abbreviations has also been added. So far such Guidelines have been published for Belgium (1967), the Netherlands (1967), Italy (1963), Denmark (1968), France (1969), Spain (1969), Portugal (1969) and Iceland (1970). Guidelines for Norway, Sweden, the CSSR and the Polish People's Republic will be appearing shortly.

3. The principles and rules contained in the above documents have proved most useful in solving cartographical problems. For the purpose of new editions these documents are being continuously supplemented. An example of how the principles of standardizing geographical names have been consistently applied in the German Democratic Republic is

"Haack Large World Atlas", Gotha, 1968/71.

In view of the experiences gathered so far in the GDR in the field of standardizing geographical names on a national as well as on an international level, the prerequisites for active international co-operation exist. Experts from the GDR attended a discussion on the standardization of geographical names of the 7th and 8th regional groups which took place in October 1971 in Prague, CSSR.