

Yugoslavia



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REPORTS BY DIVISIONS AND GOVERNMENTS ON THE SITUATION IN THEIR REGIONS AND  
COUNTRIES AND ON THE PROGRESS MADE IN THE STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL  
NAMES SINCE THE FIRST UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON THE STANDARDIZATION OF  
GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

Submitted by the Yugoslav Government

Report on the present state of work concerning the standardization  
of geographical terminology in Yugoslavia

Principles of standardization

In Yugoslavia it is mainly linguists, geographers and cartographers who study the geographical terms and names used in their professions. However, although co-operation among these experts is indispensable - particularly to cartographers whose need for precise professional terms increases daily - it is not organized.

The fact that Serbo-Croatian has two official sets of characters, Roman and Cyrillic, constitutes the first difficulty in disseminating any information, whether on plans, maps, atlases or any other publication.

In addition, Yugoslavia comprises several republics, each of which is entitled to use its own language and write in its own characters when preparing any information.

It is not difficult to conclude that in observing these principles Yugoslavia, a relatively small country, is setting an example while at the same time posing a problem for experts and scholars throughout the world. Switching back and forth from Cyrillic and Roman characters presents no major difficulty for both scripts have symbols that correspond to every sound involved. The Cyrillic script is simpler, for it has fewer diacritical marks than the Roman script; the diacritical marks in the Roman alphabet are: č, č̂, i, j, lj, nj, š, ž, dj and dž; those in the Cyrillic script are: j, ĵ and љ.

Furthermore, the Cyrillic script has only one character for each sound whereas in the Roman script certain sounds (lj, nj, dz) are represented by a combination of two characters.

Transcription from one script to the other is effected through transliteration, that is, each character of one script is replaced by the corresponding character of the other, although the pronunciation always remains unchanged.

In standardizing geographical names and terms, place, river and orographical names and names of regions inside Yugoslav frontiers, maps, atlases and all professional and scientific documentation - with the exception of literature where the traditional writing predominates - the following method is generally used: geographical names are written in Roman or Cyrillic characters in accordance with the spelling and pronunciation used in the regions in which these places are situated.

#### Organization of work for the standardization of geographical terms

In Yugoslavia it is mainly linguists who work in co-operation with geographers and cartographers on standardizing geographical terms.

This co-operation proceeds as follows: cartographers ask linguists and geographers for assistance in solving the problems that arise when geographical terms have to be written down. Such co-operation is most frequent when the name or term involved comes from the bilingual regions near the frontiers.

Organized work on the standardization of geographical terms is conducted mainly in the language institutes of the science academies of the Yugoslav republics: the Yugoslav Academy of Arts and Sciences in Zagreb, the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences in Belgrade, the Slovenian Academy of Arts and Sciences in Ljubljana, the Macedonian Academy of Arts and Sciences in Skopje and the Academy of Arts and Sciences of Bosnia and Hercegovina in Sarajevo. The Inter-Academy Onomastic Committee presided over by the Yugoslav Academy of Arts and Sciences in Zagreb co-ordinates the work carried out in this field by all Yugoslav academies.

Yugoslav cartographical institutes and experts are following with interest the work of certain foreign institutes such as the United States Board on Geographical Names, the Permanent Committee of Geographic Names (PCGN) in the United Kingdom, the Transcription Section of the Central Research Institute for Geodesy, Photogrammetry and Cartography (TsNIIGAIK) in the Soviet Union and, lastly, the Institut géographique national (IGN) in France.

Since 1950 Yugoslavia has been a member of the Bureau Hydrographique International of Monaco through the Hydrographic Institute of the Yugoslav Navy in Split.

Means of gathering and compiling data

The gathering of geographical terms is still in its preparatory phase. The main cartographical institutes of Yugoslavia (the Institute for Military Geography in Belgrade, the Hydrographic Institute of the Yugoslav Navy in Split, and the "Geokarta" Hydrographic Enterprise in Belgrade) are gathering geographical terms and using them in the maps they issue. The results of their work have not yet been published.

Of all the data gathered, so far only the names of inhabited places have been published. They are contained in the following:

- (a) A register of all inhabited places in Yugoslavia several issues of which have appeared, the latest published in 1971.
- (b) Names of places and inhabitants in Yugoslavia, Split, 1946.
- (c) A statistical yearbook of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia published annually.

Ways and means of publishing registers of geographical terms, dictionaries, yearbooks and other informational material

It is now recognized that all geographical names and terms must be listed and published. As things stand at present, Yugoslavia has the professional and scientific resources needed for this. The financial resources, on the other hand, present somewhat of a problem; however, the most difficult task will be organizing the work.

To this end, international co-operation between cartographers and geographers would be desirable, particularly between those of neighbouring countries. Following a collective effort on the part of cartographers - since it is they who need these data most - it would be possible to list and publish geographical names and terms in various kinds of publications (geographical dictionaries, yearbooks, etc.).

CONSIDERATIONS CONCERNING THE PROBLEM OF NATIONAL STANDARDIZATION OF  
GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES AND TERMS AND THE POSSIBILITY OF PREPARING AN  
INTERNATIONAL DICTIONARY OF GEOGRAPHICAL TERMS WITH INTERNATIONAL  
CO-OPERATION

In any case, the standardization of geographical terms and names depends in every country on international co-operation. Therefore, any co-operation in that work would be desirable and useful.

Yugoslavia is a relatively small country, consequently, its participation in the preparation of an international dictionary could only be justified on the grounds that the Roman characters of Serbo-Croatian are eminently suitable for transcribing the geographical terms of nearly all languages and all scripts.

The participation of Yugoslav experts in the preparation of an international dictionary of geographical names and terms would provide a splendid opportunity for publishing the geographical terms and names of Yugoslavia.

Geographical terms have been mentioned several times in this report. That means, firstly, the morphonyms by which we understand the common orographical terms which form the common part of compound geographical terms.

First, there is the problem of each nation's finding a precise and unambiguous definition of each part and feature of the surface of the earth and finding an adequate and definitive term for it. If the term is translated into another language efforts should be made to find an equivalent which is as precise as possible and as close as possible to the language from which it is translated while bearing the definition in mind.

In Serbo-Croatian, for example, when translating orographical terms and features (hill, slope, mount, mountain, mountain chain, etc.) it will be hard to find equivalent terms if the definitions for these physical features are not approximately the same in the two linguistic regions. The difficulty is even greater when the terms in question involve objects outside the earth, on the surface of the seas or beneath them.

This international task could be undertaken by cartographers working in co-operation with geographers and geomorphists.

At the same time, as important as the matter of how to write abbreviations, is the need to adopt a uniform way of writing abbreviations that designate more precisely the quality or position of the common part of compound geographical terms such as large, small, high, low, central, old, new and holy.

As we all know, these more precise qualifications of the common parts of compound geographical terms often become the main part of geographical terms and play the role of proper nouns, for example, Veliki brijeg (large hill) and Donji greben (low ridge). In such cases, if the term is shortened the common part of the compound geographic term must also be shortened.

In order to solve these problems one must obviously try to rely on international co-operation among linguists, geographers and cartographers while avoiding anything that might detract from international scientific co-operation.

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