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GAZETTEERS: NATIONAL GAZETTEERS

On the national dictionaries of Geographical Names in the USSR

Paper presented by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics^{1/}

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FOURTH UN CONFERENCE ON
THE STANDARDIZATION
OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

Geneva, August 24 - September ~~14~~, 1982
Item 7a of the provisional agenda

ON THE NATIONAL DICTIONARIES OF
GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES OF THE USSR

Submitted by the Government of
the Union of Soviet Socialist
Republics

ON THE NATIONAL DICTIONARIES OF
GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES OF THE USSR

Compilation of dictionaries of geographical names (gazetteers) carried out by national name bodies or under their supervision is the most effective way to establish standard names in all fields of their official usage. Therefore the central Soviet agency on geographical names the Permanent Joint Commission on Geographical Names has recently paid much attention to this work.

Revision of the "Dictionary of geographical names of the USSR" has been accomplished just lately. Its contents has been actualized. All the alterations of names which have taken place during recent years have been reflected. But this dictionary is known to contain a comparatively small number of the main, most frequently used USSR place-names only in the Russian language. Production of relatively complete code of place-names is complicated not only by the problems of its compiling but also by the difficulties of its publishing. In this country with its vast territory and multinational population it proves more effective, economical and operative to compile such dictionaries according to republics, regions and districts. This work has begun at ours long ago and some of the publications have been displayed at the previous UN conferences.

These publications highly differ in coverage of territory as well as in volume and contents of information on names. The methodic aid and universal programme for compiling dictionaries have been elaborated in order to unify them. Though the aid and the programme provide for different kinds of dictionaries depending on the peculiarities of territory or availability of toponymic data, they are the basic documents which define the contents and form of the national dictionaries of geographical names in this country. These dictionaries elaborated in the center or on the spots must be as full as possible codes of geographical names of a district, region or republic, systematized according to a definite programme. The aid sets up necessary minimum of information on geographical names. The compulsory contents elements of any dictionary must be: the normalized Russian form of name, the normalized national form of name in national script (for non-Russian territories), the designation of the kind of feature, the administrative unit of the 1st order, short geographical characteristic of topographic features. The indispensable condition of their publishing is the approval first by local scientific and administrative bodies then by the Permanent Joint Commission on Geographical Names. So as these dictionaries are the normative documents obligatory for all authorities and institutions of the Soviet Union

special attention is paid in them to the normalized form of name in Russian and in correspondent national language. They must contain versions of names or different names of the same feature with reference to the normalized form.