

Agenda item 11

EXONYMS

Presented by East Central and South-East Europe Division

Fourteenth Session of the United Nations
Group of Experts on Geographical Names
Geneva, from 17 to 26 May 1989

Item 11

E x o n y m s

Exonyms are the problems to which member states of the Tenth United Nations linguistic/geographical division have a different opinion mainly from the point of view of the resolutions recommending gradual reduction of exonyms.

There is deep-rooted tradition in the use of domestic forms of foreign geographical names /exonyms/ in Poland and Hungary. The participants of the Ninth session of the Tenth United Nations linguistic/geographical division /Bratislava, March 1989/ declared that the supporters of this trend are national academies of sciences in these states, which vindicate their norms of orthography, transliteration and transcription. There exist several levels of the use of exonyms: schoolbooks /maximum of exonyms/; popularizing literature, cartographical works for inland market and mass media; scientific publications, cartographical works for foreign countries and official documents /minimum of exonyms/. At this session Hungary reported on the list of Hungarian exonyms which is not published yet. Poland has started to elaborate the list of Polish exonyms in 1988. The base for the selection of Polish exonyms into prepared list is extent excerption of textual and cartographic publications. The list will contain town names arranged according to the states; orographic, hydrographic, regional, and historical names are put in alphabetical order.

In line with the resolutions of the United Nations conferences Bulgaria adopted the decision that prepared list will be consisted only of the names of states of the world,

their capitals and the most extended and verified names of orographic and hydrographic objects and regions. The base of transliteration into Bulgarian language for other names will be official forms of foreign names.

From 1974 Czechoslovakia have published the lists of Slovak and Czech exonyms. The extent of the use of every exonym had been evaluated already at the compilation. Exonyms of sporadic use had been re-evaluated on historical names. These lists serve the public and they contribute to the stabilization of the number of exonyms used in the schools, in literature and mass media. There exist no efforts to hinder the trend of systematic reduction of exonyms in Czechoslovakia which is supported by geodetic and cartographic service by means of the production of cartographical works. In the latest publications of maps and atlases exonyms are reduced to inevitable extent. Their number is lower than in published lists of exonyms.

New exonyms, which will originate under the influence of adopted systems of transliteration of Russian and Greek alphabets or other systems not introduced till this time, will intervene unfavourably in this process. E.g. hitherto form of Russian name "Charkov" in Czech and Slovak will change into "Harkov". So there will be necessary the re-evaluation of hitherto official form "Charkov" on exonym. This problem has not been discussed nor within linguistic/geographical division either within Czechoslovakia.

Member states of the Tenth United Nations linguistic/geographical division are of a different opinion also on the presentation of original official names together with exonyms /resolution 29/II/. We suppose that desired unification in the sphere of cartographical works and later in other spheres can be reached by the adoption of multilateral intergovernmental agreement in which the signatories will undertake to use this resolution or its more strict formulation in cartographic practice of own country.