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REPORTS OF THE DIVISIONS

Report for Switzerland

submitted by the Dutch- and German- speaking Division,
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Report for Switzerland

(submitted by Ernst Spiess)

1. Data Files of Geographical Names

Since our last report to the UN Conference on Geographical Names in 1992 in New York activities continued at the Federal Office of Topography for a detailed database of geographical names. The final aim is to create a toponymic data file of all names contained in the National Topographical Map Series. All names of the four maps at 1:200'000 and much of those on the 20 sheets at the 1:100'000 scale are already available on diskette from the institution named above. The complete file is supposed to hold some 250'000 names. Each record consists of the official name, height and national grid coordinates as well as geographical latitude and longitude, a feature code, the numbers of the map sheets in which this name is contained and the Canton and Community to which it belongs. Up to now no rivers have been included. Diskettes with a provisional version of this data base can be purchased from the Federal Office of Topography (see address at the end of this report).

In the last years growing interest has been shown in the creation of data files at the cadastral level. This move goes parallel with the project of the renewal of the cadastral survey on a digital bases.

2. National and Regional Geographical Names Authorities

Switzerland has no national names authority as requested by former resolutions of the UN. This is due to the fact that the decree released by the Federal Government in 1970 ¹ is still valid. It does not provide for a national body but states that each of the 26 Cantons has to install a Cantonal Names Commission and that the Cantons are responsible for further instructions on name collection and

¹ Bundesbeschluss über Orts-, Gemeinde- und Stationsnamen vom 30. November 1970

orthography. Action towards a national names authority still has low priority, because the Cantonal Names Commissions function to everybody's satisfaction.

In addition the following federal government offices are involved in names standardization on a national level:

- Federal Office of Topography (responsible for the names in the national topographical map series)
- Directorate of Cadastral Surveys (responsible for the names in the large scale cadastral plans and in the digital cadastral database)
- Federal Office of Statistics (responsible for the gazetteer of administrative units)
- Federal Office of Traffic (names of the stations of the public transport systems) and the General Directorate of Post Services (responsible for the names of the post offices and bus stations)
- Division for International Organizations in the Federal Ministry for Foreign Affairs (responsible for the names of foreign countries)
- Institute of Cartography of the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH) Zurich (names in school atlases and in the Swiss National Atlas, liaison to multilateral bodies)

3. Gazetteers and Publications

The work on the Concise Gazetteer of Switzerland, based on the data file mentioned above and holding approximately 14'000 names, including all those of the map at 1:200'000 scale and all communities, was continued. It will be made available in 1994 and also on a diskette.

The following is a list of available gazetteers for Switzerland:

- i) Bundesamt für Statistik / Office fédéral de la statistique: Amtliches Gemeindeverzeichnis der Schweiz / Liste officielle des communes de la Suisse / Elenco ufficiale dei comuni della Svizzera.- Bern / Berne, 1986., 203 p.
- ii) Neues Schweizer Ortslexikon / Nouveau Dictionnaire Géographique de la Suisse / Nuovo Dizionario Geografico della Svizzera.- Verlag / Edition / Edizione C.J.Bucher GmbH, München und Luzern. 23. vollständig neubearbeitete Auflage, 1983, 347 S.
- iii) Every telephone directory contains some 4800 official names of the major settlements.
- iv) The Index to Stations (in Switzerland) in the official timetable, contains all stations with their official spelling:
Schweizerische Bundesbahnen / Chemins de fer fédéraux suisses / Ferrovie federali svizzere / Viafiero federalas svizras / Swiss Federal Railways ed.: Offizielles Kursbuch / Indicateur officiel / Orario ufficiale / Urari uffizial / Official Timetable, Bern / Berne / Berna, annual editions.
- v) Furrer, Norbert: Glossarium Helvetiae Historicum - Historisches Lexikon der Schweiz / Dictionnaire historique de la Suisse / Dizionario storico della Svizzera; 1.Ortsnamen / toponymes / toponimi / numi locals, Bern 1991. xxxv + 199 p.

Furthermore six Cantons have published gazetteers for their territories, in three others such work is under way.

4. Information on Name Changes

In the periode 1980 to 1994 the number of communities has changed from 3029 to 3016, due to some amalgamations but also separations. A few changes of community names occurred in bilingual areas. A complete record of the official names of all communities, districts and cantons is given in the gazetteer i) mentioned above, published 1986 by the Federal Office of Statistics. Since then, however, the following changes have to be communicated:

a) Communities that were amalgamated with others:			Date:
Montécu	amalgamated with	Bonnefontaine	1.1.1989
Altavilla	amalgamated with	Murten	1.1.1991
Morlens	amalgamated with	Vuarmarens	1.1.1991
Les Friques	amalgamated with	Saint-Aubin (FR)	1.1.1991
Franex	amalgamated with	Murist	1.1.1992
Andhausen	amalgamated with	Berg (TG)	1.1.1993
Blessens	amalgamated with	Rue	1.1.1993
Heinrichswil and Winistorf	became	Heinrichswil-Winistorf	1.1.1993
Lohn (SO) and Ammansegg	became	Lohn-Ammansegg	1.1.1993
Aeschi (SO) and Burgäschi	became	Aeschi (SO)	1.1.1994
Scherzingen and Landschlacht	became	Münsterlingen	1.1.1994
b) Communities that were separated:			
Steckborn	separated into	Steckborn and Mammern	1.1.1993
Rubigen	separated into	Rubigen, Allmendingen, Trimstein	1.1.1993
Bottighofen	separated into	Münsterlingen, Bottighofen	1.1.1994
c) Communities having changed their name:			
Somvix	became	Sumvigti	19.7.1986
Villa (GR)	became	Vella	23.9.1987
Rüthi (Rheintal)	became	Rüthi (SG)	7.12.1993
Stein (Toggenburg)	became	Stein (SG)	7.12.1993
d) Districts («Kreise» and «Bezirke») having changed their name:			
Bezirk Balsthal-Gäu	became	Bezirk Gäu	12.9.1991
Bezirk Balsthal-Tal	became	Bezirk Thal	12.9.1991
Bezirk Kriegstetten	became	Bezirk Wasseramt	12.9.1991
Kreis Obtasna	became	Kreis Sur Tasna	23.9.1991
Kreis Remüs	became	Kreis Ramosch	29.11.1991
Kreis Oberhalbstein	became	Kreis Sursess	2.6.1992
Bezirk and Kreis Münstertal	became	Bezirk and Kreis Val Müstair	3.9.1992
Kreis Untertasna	became	Kreis Suot Tasna	3.9.1992
e) Changes in the administrative divisions:			
- The community Zollikon was transferred from the «Bezirk Zürich» to the «Bezirk Meilen» 1986			

- 11 communities were transferred from the «Bezirk Zürich» to the new «Bezirk Dietikon»: Aesch bei Birmensdorf, Birmensdorf (ZH), Dietikon, Geroldswil, Oberengstringen, Oetwil an der Limmat, Schlieren, Uitikon, Unterengstringen, Urdorf, Weiningen (ZH) 7.12.1989
- The «Bezirk Laufen» with the following 13 communities was transferred from the «Kanton Bern» to the «Kanton Basel-Landschaft»: Blauen, Brislach, Burg im Leimental, Dittingen, Duggingen, Grellingen, Laufen, Liesberg, Nenzlingen, Roggenburg, Röschenz, Wahlen, Zwingen. 1.1.1994

5. Reduction of the Exonyms

Maps for international use, produced in Switzerland, show the official names. Common exonyms are frequently used in official correspondence, in newspapers, in television and on road signs. In the German, the French and the Italian edition of the new school atlases², that were published in 1993, corresponding German, French and Italian exonyms are used throughout, in order to be conform with the other media. The official names are occasionally added in the map in parenthesis and added throughout in the names index.

A list of German, French, Italian and Rheto-roman exonyms of Swiss communities, that are recommended for common use, is given in the publication i). Several institutions contributed to a more extended list that includes also features other than settlements as well as references to names that are no longer in current usage. It proved to be impossible to decide on a national level, which exonyms have become obsolete. There are exonyms which are still in daily use in newspapers within a region, but are no longer used or scarcely known in other parts of the country (e.g. German «Martinach» for French «Martigny»). One can observe also that along the language borders the people representing the language minority make considerably more use of exonyms.

6. International Cooperation

Switzerland has been active in the StAGN (Ständiger Ausschuss für Geographische Namen). Having no national names committee with official status in Switzerland, recruitment for participation in meetings and other activities happens on an ad-hoc basis and is supported only by the institution the respective participant belongs to. According to a mutual agreement, the editor of this report functions as a coordinator in national and international affairs concerning geographical names, with alternatives in the Federal Office of Topography (Bundesamt für Landestopographie). Correspondence may be addressed as follows:

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² Schweizer Weltatlas / Atlas mondial suisse / Atlante mondiale svizzero.- Herausgegeben von der Konferenz Kantonalen Erziehungsdirektoren. Zürich 1993. 176 map pages, 5 pp. register of topics, 43 pp. name index.