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THE SITUATION IN ELABORATION OF A SINGLE ROMANIZATION SYSTEM
FOR THE CYRILLIC ALPHABET FOR INTERNATIONAL USE*

Paper presented by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

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THE SITUATION IN ELABORATION OF A SINGLE ROMANIZATION SYSTEM
FOR THE CYRILLIC ALPHABET FOR INTERNATIONAL USE

1. Development of international relations evidently and urgently caused the demand for a single Romanization system of the Cyrillic alphabet. In recent years it became especially clear that the sectors of such a system application go beyond the framework of geographical names and cover other fields e.g. personal names, documents, bibliographical information, etc. No doubt, such a system may be recognized as an international one if it is sanctioned by the country whose geographical names are converted.
2. The problem of the elaboration of a single Romanization system for the Cyrillic alphabet serving several languages (languages of the USSR peoples and those of other countries) turned out a more complicated one than it could be expected. Elaboration of such a system is conducted by different national and international organizations for several decades. At present this work is conducted in the USSR by GOSSTANDART (All-Union Research Institute of Technical Information, Classification and Codification), the USSR Academy of Sciences and some other agencies; the main international organizations working in this field are the United Nations, ISO and COMECON. In order to make the system a truly universal one it is necessary to co-ordinate actions of all these organizations.
3. The most essential point in the elaboration of a Romanization system for the Cyrillic alphabet is what kind of system it should be: a system of monographs with diacritics or a system of digraphs. Practice proved the progressiveness and perspectiveness of the system of monographs with diacritics because it is neutral to Roman-writing languages and more economical.
4. The present state of affairs in the Romanization of the Russian alphabet is as follows (vide the Annex):
 - (a) There is a Soviet State Standard (GOST) based on digraph system but permitting application of other systems for conversion of geographical names. Validity of this GOST expires in the nearest time and it will be revised.
 - (b) Beginning from 1967 the Soviet cartography uses the system elaborated by the USSR Academy of Sciences in 1951-1956 which is mainly based on usage of monographs with diacritics.
 - (c) The ISO system which is known in several variants is at present under revision. The elaborators of the latest variant - ISO/DIS-9 again renounced the use of digraphs even as alternative variants (which was admissible according to document ISO R9-68) and in most cases came back to monographs.
 - (d) In 1976 such a project was drafted by COMECON countries. The COMECON project which is to be approved in 1977 is also based on monograph system though it accepts usage of digraphs for computer processing. Its main principles are close to those of the ISO system and at present the work is under way for drawing

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these systems nearer in order to elaborate a single Romanization for all Cyrillic alphabets to meet the requirements of COMECON and ISO. The main task here is to get approval of the projects by the Cyrillic-writing countries: Bulgaria, USSR, Yugoslavia and Mongolia, because certain items of the project contradict to the national traditions of those countries.

5. Thus, transition from the Romanization used at present in cartography to a new one is closely connected with the elaboration of a single Romanization system for the Cyrillic script. At present such a system is under intensive elaboration.

Annex: The Main Romanization Systems of the Russian Alphabet.

Annex

The Main Romanization Systems
 of the Russian Alphabet

Russian alphabet	GOST 16876-71	USSR Academy of Sciences 1951-1956	ISO/DIS-9 1975	COMECON 1976
а	a	a	a	a
б	b	b	b	b
в	v	v	v	v
г	g	g	g	g
д	d	d	d	d
е	e	e/je 2/	e	e
ё	e/ë	'o/o/jo 2/	e	e
ж	zh	ž	ž	ž
з	z	z	z	z
и	i	i/ji 2/	i	i
й	j/jj 1/	j	j	j
к	k	k	k	k
л	l	l	l	l
м	m	m	m	m
н	n	n	n	n
о	o	o	o	o
п	p	p	p	p
р	r	r	r	r
с	s	s	s	s
т	t	t	t	t
у	u	u	u	u
ф	f	f	f	f
х	kh	ch	h	h
ц	c	c	c	c
ч	ch	c	c	c
ш	sh	š	š	š
щ	shch/q 1/	šć	šć	šć
ъ	"	-	ä	ä
ы	y	y	y	y
ь	'	'/- 2/	'	'
э	e/eh 1/	e	e	e
ю	ju	'u/ju 2/	ju	ju
я	ja	'a/ja 2/	ja	ja

- 1) The variants acceptable for computer processing.
- 2) Position variants.