

UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC
AND
SOCIAL COUNCIL



Distr.
LIMITED
E/CONF.69/L.105
22 August 1977
ENGLISH ONLY



THIRD UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON THE
STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES
Athens, Greece
17 August - 7 September 1977
Item 13(b) of the provisional agenda

ON THE RELATIONSHIP OF OFFICIAL NAMES AND
EXONYMS AS ONE OF THE PROBLEMS OF THE
STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

Paper presented by the
Czechoslovak Socialist Republic

ATH.77-176

THIRD UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON THE
STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES
Athens, 17 August - 7 September 1977
Item 13(b) of the provisional agenda.

Czechoslovak Socialist Republic

ON THE RELATIONSHIP OF OFFICIAL NAMES AND
EXONYMS AS ONE OF THE PROBLEMS OF THE
STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

Geographical names (toponyms) constitute one of the Three basic and integral elements of topographical (geographical) phenomena and their depiction on maps. The formulation and establishment of geographical names and their usage within the cultural sphere of a language constitute two series of difficult problems, which have not as yet been fully resolved and which must be tackled due to increasing social demands.

The former series of problems, that of the formulation and establishment of proper geographical names in particular, is at an advanced stage of solution on both national and international levels and it is clear that the name of a topographical (geographical) phenomenon should appear first and foremost in the official language of the country, or in its officially adopted transcription into Roman characters as the case may be, on the territory determined by official definition as the area in which it is to be used. Only in this way can a geographical name fulfil its basic social function, that of rendering an officially recognized, irrefutable and distortion-free identification of the phenomenon which it designates. The aim of the solution of this series of problems is, in short, to standardize geographical names into forms giving the maximum possible information corresponding to objective reality. This would contribute significantly to a geographical name's being able, in any form of usage, but especially in a cartographical publication, to fulfil its social function.

The latter series of problems, that of the usage in particular of proper geographical names, is more complex, since it does not comprise merely the usage of proper geographical names in maps, where a stabilized nominative form is predominantly used. This series of problems comprises the usage of geographical names in whole cultural sphere of a language, especially the question of use and declination of geographical names in accordance with existing linguistic rules.

The situation is not yet quite clear in this latter series of problems. Apart from the official forms of geographical names, there exists also a number of traditional geographical names, exonyms, connected with the cultural heritage of the language and there is also a tendency to create new geographical exonyms especially if it is difficult, if not impossible, to decline the names in their official forms.

While in the former series of problems the establishment and selection of official versions of geographical names both in Czech and Slovak and in other languages is in practice limited only to names of larger geographical units (e.g. the names of countries, mountain ranges covering more than the area of one country, large rivers, extensive- especially international- areas of water, etc.) related to the present, in the latter series of problems historical exonyms coexist side by side with exonym forms which have originated in the recent time. This concerns large and small geographical units alike.

In this connection the area of the cultural influence of the language is sometimes mentioned as a factor giving the right to use exonym forms of the names of topographical (geographical) phenomena outwith the area of the given country. This factor is related to the question of historic exonyms, not however to the contemporary naming of topographical (geographical) phenomena. The existence of an official language for a given territory also determines the area of its cultural influence at the present time.

The need to solve the question of geographical exonyms has also been felt on an international scale. While the first

UN conference on the standardization of geographical names in Geneva in 1967 did not agree on an appropriate resolution, the second UN conference on the standardization of geographical names in London in 1972 adopted two resolutions concerning this question. In resolutions No.28 and No.29 ^{1/} it is recommended that lists be compiled of commonly used geographical exonyms, to revise these and print them, to limit their use (especially in cartographic publications) as much as possible and in the shortest possible time, if they are to be used at all.

In resolution No.31 headed "The Agreement on the Tasks and Objectives of International Standardization" ^{2/} the Conference recommended and adopted the following general definition: "The aim of international standardization of proper geographical names is to establish only one way of writing each proper geographical name on Earth and the names of each topographical phenomena on other planets and stars in the solar system. This should be done on the basis of international agreement. Unity should be also reached in the transcription of names into various scripts."

The resolutions mentioned also suggest how to solve the question of using geographical names in literature. The possibilities are as follows:

- 1/ a foreign geographical name (even if it consists of more than one word) will become a part of the vocabulary in its official form and will be declined according to the rules of the adopting language;
- 2/ if it is impossible to decline the foreign geographical name, the text will be phrased in such a way that the geographical name would occur only in the nominative case;
- 3/ if it is impossible to decline the foreign geographical name and if there exists a standardized exonym, the standardized exonym will be used and when it occurs for the first time, it will be complemented with the foreign geographical name in its official form in brackets;

- 4/ if it is impossible to decline the foreign geographical name and if there exists a standardized exonym, the standardized exonym will be used and the official form of the foreign geographical name will be included in the index of the publication.

All these alternatives have already been used in books in the Czech and Slovak language, especially in supplementary texts of geographical publications and it is possible to say that they have proved satisfactory.

The alternative of using the geographical names in their official form in the nominative is especially recommendable for geographical names consisting of more than one word, of which some have the character of a general geographical noun. The principle of non-translating and non-taking out of individual parts of compound geographical names was also confirmed in the Report of the Second UN Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names ^{3/}, where the publication of the Geographical Institute of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences in Brno "The Principles of the Use of Names of Geomorphological Units on the Territory of the Czech Socialist Republic in Foreign-language Texts" (Prague 1972) was quoted as an example of the carrying out of the standardization.

In connection with the ever-increasing number of proper geographical names in their official forms, which are being included in geographical publications and also used in other contexts in a given linguistic area, the question of their pronunciation comes to the foreground.

There are two basic alternatives:

- a/ to pronounce geographical names as they are spelled;
- b/ to pronounce geographical names according to the pronunciation of the individual languages.

Since it is difficult to ensure correct pronunciation of geographical names in schools, this is sometimes used as an argument for using geographical exonyms in maps and atlases designed for school requirements.

There is much evidence of the parallel use of official,

standardized geographical names (especially in books for the general public and secondary schools) and geographical exonyms (especially in publications designed for elementary schools).

Indisputably, it is a problem to synchronize in schools the rendering of fundamental information about foreign languages (especially on their alphabet and pronunciation) and the rendering of fundamental geographic information about the world.

The necessity to unify in each language with the maximum use of its own alphabet the elements showing how to pronounce geographical names is closely connected with the above-mentioned problem. This is one of the larger problems en route to the standardization of geographical names facing linguists.

Cartographers contribute towards the solving of this problem by not only giving in more important publications data about the general concept of how geographical names have been used (usually in the introduction to the publication) but their indexes of geographical names often also include

- a/ general guidelines on the pronunciation of each language;
- b/ in brackets after the name the concrete pronunciation of the individual geographical names.

The dynamism of the development of the contemporary world, the boom of the scientific and technological revolution both in the East and in the West necessitates the transformation of school education in such a way that the instruction of the younger generation would correspond to the ever more exacting living conditions in the world. There is no time nor it is possible to emburden the cognitive abilities of the younger generation with many antiquated exonyms, the awareness of which only serves to complicate the learning of the geographical knowledge required. Since future generations will need more and more geographic information and therefore will have to know the names of a considerably larger number of geographical phenomena than ever before, it

is simply impossible to further complicate school education with geographical names the knowledge of which, except in the narrow circle of national literature, is of no use at all.

A consistent introduction of official forms of geographical names into schools, i.e. into maps and atlases and textbooks of geography is one of the serious prerequisites of a true standardization of geographical names. Although difficult, the synchronization of the teaching of geography and foreign languages would bring fruitful results, since it would be possible to use the time allotted to the teaching of geography in a truly economical way.

References:

- 1/ The Second United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, United Nations, New York 1974, Vol. I., Report of the Conference, p. 15.
- 2/ *ibid.*
- 3/ *ibid.*, p. 4, paragraph 27.

R é s u m é

La coexistence des noms officiels et des exonymes est l'un des problèmes sérieux qui se posent lors de la mise au jour d'une normalisation de la terminologie géographique.

La solution d'une première série de problèmes, à savoir du mode de la détermination des noms géographiques propres, touche à sa fin non seulement dans le cadre national, mais encore à l'échelle internationale, et il apparaît de toute évidence que l'on devrait employer comme dénomination d'un objet topographique (géographique) avant tout la forme de la langue officielle de l'Etat en question, éventuellement la même forme dans la transcription officielle en caractères de l'alphabet latin sur le territoire défini par une norme étatique comme l'aire de son utilisation.

Quant à une seconde série de problèmes, la situation n'est pas encore tout à fait clarifiée. A côté des formes officielles des noms géographiques il y a nombre de noms usuels, d'exonymes, liés à l'héritage culturel ancien de la langue d'une part, de l'autre on constate une tendance à former de nouveaux exonymes géographiques, en particulier dans les cas où la déclinaison des formes officielles des noms est difficile, voir complètement impossible.

Dans les résolutions No^s 28, 29 et 31 de la Deuxième Conférence de l'ONU sur la normalisation de la terminologie géographique, London 1972, on peut trouver aussi le point de départ même pour l'utilisation des noms géographiques dans la littérature. Les possibilités suivantes se dessinent:

1) le nom géographique propre (même le nom constitué par plusieurs mots) est accepté comme partie intégrante du fonds lexical dans sa forme officielle et sera décliné selon les règles de la langue d'arrivée;

2) si la possibilité de décliner le nom n'est pas donnée, le texte sera modulé pour conférer au nom géographique uniquement la fonction de nominatif;

3) si la déclinaison du nom est impossible et que l'exonyme normalisé existe, on se sert de ce dernier (s'il en existe un) et lors de sa première citation dans le texte on mettra entre parenthèses l'exonyme géographique étranger dans sa forme officielle;

4) s'il est impossible de décliner le nom géographique étranger et que l'on dispose d'un exonyme normalisé (qu'il en existe un), on emploie l'exonyme normalisé, tandis que le nom géographique étranger sera cité dans sa version officielle dans l'index des noms de la publication.

En fait, dans la littérature tchèque et slovaque, toutes ces possibilités ont déjà été actualisées, en particulier dans des textes supplémentaires des travaux cartographiques et on peut conclure qu'elles sont pleinement utilisables.

Lors de la solution de ce problème, il faut tenir compte de son rapport étroit avec la nécessité d'unifier dans chaque langue aussi les moyens informant sur le mode de la prononciation des noms géographiques, profitant au maximum de son propre alphabet. Il s'agit-là d'une contribution non négligeable de linguistes participant à la réalisation de la normalisation de la terminologie géographique.

En principe, deux solutions possibles peuvent être envisagées:

a) lecture "littérale" des noms, en respectant leur forme écrite

b) prononcer les noms géographiques selon les règles des langues d'origine. .

Les cartographes s'efforcent de faire face à cette exigence en insérant dans des travaux importants non seulement des indications sur la conception globale de l'utilisation de la terminologie géographique (en règle générale, dans l'introduction de l'ouvrage), mais, de plus, leurs listes de noms géographiques contiennent souvent

a) des avertissements explicatifs concernant des règles générales de prononciation de la langue en question

b) la transcription phonétique des noms géographiques (donnée entre parenthèse).

Une mise en usage conséquente des formes officielles (reconnues par les autorités) des noms géographiques dans l'enseignement scolaire, plus particulièrement dans les cartes, dans les atlas et dans les manuels de géographie scolaires, est l'une des conditions - très importante - d'une réalisation effective de la normalisation de la terminologie géographique.

Resumen

La relación entre nombres oficiales y exónimos constituye uno de los problemas más serios en la realización de la estandarización de la terminología geográfica.

El primer conjunto de problemas, es decir el que se refiere al modo de establecer notablemente los nombres geográficos propios, se encuentra en una etapa avanzada de solución, no solamente al nivel nacional, sino también internacional; claro está que la denominación (el nombre) de un objeto topográfico (geográfico) habría que utilizarla ante todo en la lengua oficial (de Estado), respectivamente en forma de su transcripción al alfabeto latino, oficialmente aceptada, en el territorio señalado por norma estatal en calidad de región de su utilización.

En cuanto al segundo conjunto de problemas, la situación no ha sido plenamente esclarecida, hasta la fecha. Además de formas oficiales de nombres geográficos existe toda una serie de nombres geográficos arraigados y generalmente admitidos, exónimos, que se relacionan con la herencia cultural del idioma; por otra parte se manifiestan tendencias de crear nuevos exónimos geográficos, sobre todo en caso de que la declinación de nombres en formas oficiales resulte difícil, si no totalmente imposible.

En las resoluciones núm. 28, 29 y 31 de la Segunda conferencia de la ONU sobre la estandarización de la terminología geográfica (Londres, 1972) se puede hallar una salida para solucionar el conjunto de problemas relacionado con la utilización de nombres geográficos en la literatura. He aquí las posibilidades que se perfilan al respecto:

1) nombre (denominación) geográfico extranjero (incluso si está formado de varias palabras) pasará a ser del léxico en forma oficial declinándose conforme a las reglas del idioma receptor;

2) en caso de la imposibilidad de declinar un nombre geográfico extranjero, el texto sufrirá cambios con el fin de que el nombre geográfico aparezca exclusivamente en el nominativo;

3) en caso de la imposibilidad de declinar un nombre geográfico extranjero y a condición de que exista un exónimo estandarizado, se utilizará el exónimo estandarizado (si es que existe); al usarlo por vez primera en el texto, se añadirá entre paréntesis el correspondiente nombre geográfico extranjero en forma oficial;

4) en caso de la imposibilidad de declinar un nombre geográfico extranjero y a condición de que exista un exónimo estandarizado (si es que existe), se utilizará el exónimo estandarizado y el nombre geográfico extranjero en forma oficial aparecerá en el índice de nombres de la publicación.

En la práctica, tales posibilidades ya han sido aprovechadas en la literatura checa y sloveca, nombradamente en textos complementarios de obras cartográficas, y es de suponer que convengan plenamente a su objetivo.

Con la solución de dicho problema se relaciona inseparablemente la necesidad de unificar, aprovechando al máximo en cada idioma su propio alfabeto, los medios que indican el modo de pronunciar nombres geográficos. Esta es una de las tareas sin duda importantes que aguardan a los lingüistas en lo que atañe a la realización de la estandarización de la terminología geográfica.

Basicamente, hay dos posibilidades de solución:

- a) leer los nombres geográficos tal y como quedan escritos;
- b) leer los nombres geográficos conforme a las reglas de pronunciación de los respectivos idiomas.

Los cartógrafos prestan al respecto su ayuda citando, en obras importantes, no solamente datos relacionados con la concepción general de la utilización de la terminología geográfica (por regla general, en la introducción a la obra), sino también complementando muy a menudo los índices de nombres geográficos con:

- a) reglas generales de la pronunciación de los respectivos idiomas
- b) pronunciación concreta apareciendo paréntesis detrás de los nombres geográficos.

Una implantación consecuente de las formas oficiales de nombres geográficos en el proceso de educación en las escuelas, es decir ante todo en mapas geográficos, atlas y manuales de geografía, constituye uno de los requisitos indispensables y de mayor importancia para realizar con eficiencia una verdadera estandarización de la terminología geográfica.