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Item No.15 of the
Provisional Agenda*

REPORT

ON THE STANDARDIZATION OF ANTARCTIC NAMES

(Submitted by the Dutch-and German-speaking Division)**

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* WP No. I

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Federal Republic of Germany.

In September 1982 work has been begun in the Institut für An-
gewandte Geodäsie (IfAG) on stock-taking of the German lan-
guage names and designations of topographic/geographical ob-
jects within the Antarctic region. For this purpose a digital
file "Antarctic Region" has been installed.

By this file all geographical names are covered which have
been given till 1945 by Germany and afterwards by the Federal
Republic of Germany for objects within the Antarctic region
(including the sub-Antarctic islands). Beside the names,
further information is given: variant names, co-ordinates,
hights or depths, date of name-giving, name-giving expe-
dition (with mentioning of sources), etymology etc.

In order to show the historical development of the spelling
and meaning, all names are taken from the original sources
(expedition reports with maps). Later alterations and va-
riant names are also covered.

The stock of 556 geographical names (as to April 1984) may
be divided in two groupings:

(1) Names given till 1945: 427 names
(2) Names given after 1945: 129 names

The provisional list was submitted to the Ständiger Ausschuß
für geographische Namen (StAGN) for revision.

Beside the revision by StAGN it is forseen to make references
to modern maps.

Afterwards, the names will be submitted by IfAG to the Scientific
Committee on Antarctic Research (LA-SCAR), that will decide on
the finalized standard forms. The result will be published in
the National Antarctic Research Reports to SCAR.

We may hesitate, however, in the case of languages with a
highly non-phonemic writing system, like English (non-phonemic =
not having a separate letter for each distinctive sound).
Indeed, No. 7 of the Third Conference refers specifically to
these cases. It is clear that a letter-to-letter translitera-
tion of English names into, for example, the Cyrillic alphabet
must lead to a wrong pronunciation of a lot of them. The same
is true, however, for continental Roman alphabet users who are
compelled to pronounce English place-names [1].

Moreover, transcription of English place-names according to their
pronunciation would lead to a colliding of names and name-elements
that are by their spelling distinguished in English (Wight - white,
Knole - Knowle, Kniveton - Neaton). And last but not least, the
ideal of reversability would be entirely abandoned. For these
reasons it is preferable to transcribe also English names accor-
ding to a fixed key regardless of their pronunciation.

Though the Resolution No. 7 is unworkable and ought to be altered
or withdrawn during the next Conference, there is of course -
irrespective of the case of transcription - a need for aids to
pronunciation of place-names. The signs of the Roman alphabet
for example stand for different sounds in different languages and
in one language a letter may have different realizations in diffe-
ring surroundings.

This need can partly be met in the "Toponymic Guidelines", where a
paragraph is reserved for "Aids to pronunciation of geographical
names" (Report of the Fourth Conference, vol. I, p. 29). These
"Guidelines" being for international use, the only adequate way
to indicate the pronunciation of graphs is by means of the Inter-
national Phonetic Association Alphabet [2]. It is up to each language
community to "translate" this system to its members. Of course
there is much that cannot be described in this way, to wit, all
that is peculiar to individual names such as stress, tone and
the elision of sounds (e.g. final -s and -z in most but not all
French names). Nevertheless such aids may give a general im-
pression as to how place names ought to be pronounced.

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[1] Foreigners, but also most Englishmen, cannot do without works
   like Klaus Forster's A Pronouncing Dictionary of English
   Place-Names including standard local and archaic variants
   (London-Boston 1981).

[2] The Principles of the International Phonetic Association
   (London 1949; reprint 1981).