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Group of Expert on  
Geographical Names

WORKING PAPER

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Provisional Agenda

Status of the USSR activities in  
naming Antarctic geographical entities

Nowadays intensive investigation of Antarctica is being carried out. It includes complex expeditions for general research, topographic, air and space survey of the surface, topographic and thematic map compilation.

As a consequence of active exploration geographical features naming remains a topical problem. Its complication is accounted for by physical and geographical salient features of the continent and character of its study. For example one can mark out:

- new geographic nomenclature of names connected with features of Antarctic relief forms;
- different national expeditions worked in close contact and often overlapping each other for a long time. This caused linguistic and priority troubles.

The said above allows to refer to Antarctica as on onomastically complicated region. The task of Antarctic entities geographical names normalization includes the following:

- revealing of the existing names and their accordance to particular objects;
- naming anonymous entities;
- establishment of the right Russian name spelling, Russian rendering the foreign names and Latin transliterations of Russian names.

Scientific activity on the Antarctic exploration in the USSR is coordinated by the USSR Academy of Science Interbranch Commission on

Antarctic investigations. Practical and scientific activity on the Antarctic entity nomination is carried out by the Chief Administration on Geodesy and Cartography Nomination Service together with the USSR Academy of Science Interbranch Commission on Antarctic investigations.

The Chief Administration on Geodesy and Cartography Nomination Service has at its disposal the Antarctic geographic names card index including continental and submarine relief objects and islands up to 40° of South latitude. Each name occupies the individual card - its passport, and contains the name, kind of entity, coordinates, name transcription (in case it is not Russian), name forms used in various national cartographic sources and short historical reference.

Along with card index maintenance the Nomination Service staff conducts theoretical and methodical works, among which is development of special toponymic manuals and standards on geographic entities nomination.

To meet the requirements of Antarctic exploration needs the working body of the GUGK Interbranch Commission on Geographic Names - Working Group on Geographic Names was set up. The group consists of members from institutions dealing with practical and theoretical Antarctic investigations. The Interbranch Commission systematically publishes the lists of new Antarctic entities Soviet names. These lists are also regularly published in the proceedings of the mentioned institutions. Before publication the names are to be considered by the Interbranch Commission on Geographic Names which after approval, proposes them to the Academy of Science Presidium for adoption of a resolution on the name appropriation.

Rules and technique of the Antarctica entities names normalization employed for cartographic, reference and the like issues are given in the "Guideline on the Antarctic Geographical Names Normalization" published in 1984. The objective of this Guideline is to standardize practical activities on revealing the existing names of a certain region, naming its newly discovered anonymous objects, establishment of the right spelling for Russian names and Russian transcription of foreign names and Russian names Latin transliteration.

Several other normative, methodic and reference works facilitating to solve particular problems were published. For example:

- "Naming, Renaming and Specification of the Physical Geographical USSR and Foreign Entities", Moscow, 1976;

- "Naming, Renaming and Specification of the Physical Geographical USSR, World Ocean and Antarctic Entities", Moscow, 1979;

- "Naming the Physical Geographical Antarctic Entities Discovered by Soviet Antarctic Expeditions in 1971-74" Moscow, 1979;

- "List of East Antarctica Geographical Names", Leningrad, 1959;

- "Russian and Soviet Geographical Names on the Antarctica Maps", Dubrovin L.I., Preobrajenskij M.A., Leningrad, 1976, etc.

"Dictionary of Antarctic Geographical Names" is being completed. It contains about 6 300 Russian, Soviet and foreign names of the most significant Antarctic objects (the continent itself and subantarctic region). Its purpose is to establish compulsory and stable spelling of Russian names and Russian representation of foreign names throughout the whole territory of the USSR. The dictionary structure corresponds to the Russian alphabet. Each name is followed by the item including the Russian name or its right reproduction in case the name is not Russian, Russian term for the kind of object, the state to which it belongs, if there is such one, Romanized name and coordinates of the object. The features listed in the dictionary were chosen from various cartographic, reference and other sources.