

Group of Experts on
Geographical Names

Seventeenth Session
New York, 13-24 June, 1994

Working Paper No. 11

June 1994

Agenda Item 15

EXONYMS

Information presented by the East Central and Southeast
European Division*

Prepared by Béla Pokoly, Chairman of the Division

There was a lively discussion on the UN definition of exonyms and their use in East Central Europe on the 12th session of the Division (Budapest, 6-10 September, 1994). The definition of the term by UNGEEN Glossary on Toponymic Terminology is equivocal, as under its classifications many geographical names in Central Europe are both endonyms and exonyms at the same time. Specialists of the working group are kindly requested to look into this matter more closely. Agreement was general, however, among the delegates of the session that the definition and usage of exonyms must exclude politics and should be based on linguistic and cartographic argumentation, in addition to the existing recommendations of the United Nations.

Albania informed, that it uses a number of exonyms, written - naturally - in the Albanian (Roman) alphabet. In the Albanian cartographic practice however, all foreign names are phonetically transcribed, even those written in the Roman alphabet, into the Roman alphabet used in Albania. The Albanian delegate was reminded on the Division meeting that this practice does not follow the relevant UN recommendations.

Bulgaria and Ukraine reported that they use very few exonyms on maps in accordance with UN resolutions. All other foreign names are transcribed phonetically into the respective Cyrillic alphabet.

Cyprus reminded the session that Greeks have long used exonyms due to their historic travels and trade activities. A comprehensive geographical lexicon is being prepared which will include ancient and modern Greek exonyms.

The Czech Republic indicated that the UN definition of exonym may have to be revised. It suggested that the UN state the type of maps it recommends for the different degree of usage of exonyms (eg. total exclusion for one type, allowing usage to a given degree in others).

Hungary gave information on the practice of using exonyms on maps. Maps for international usage exclude exonyms; atlases, other popular publications (like road maps etc.) use exonyms to different extent given in second place in brackets, while school atlases, maps give the Hungarian exonym (if there is one) in first place, with the official endonym in brackets.

Poland follows a similar practice to Hungary's. It is also preparing to publish the list of exonyms for European areas falling outside the former USSR.

The Slovak Republic told the session that the usage of exonyms, in accordance with UN recommendations, are very much limited on maps published in that country. When they appear on maps (intended in this case only for domestic usage) they

are always in second place after the endonym and put in parenthesis.

Slovenia indicated that the usage of exonyms on maps is rather similar to that of Hungary.