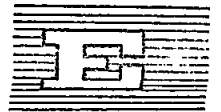


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SECOND UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON THE
STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES
London, 10-31 May 1972
Item 11(a) of the provisional agenda

WRITING SYSTEMS
TRANSFER OF NAMES FROM ONE WRITING SYSTEM INTO ANOTHER

Romanization of Cyrillic Script

Paper submitted by the Government of Austria

REPORT

on the First International Meeting of the Transcription Commission
of the International Committee of Slavists
Vienna, April 6 to 8, 1972

The First International Meeting of the Transcription Commission of the International Committee of Slavists was held in Vienna at the seat of the Institute of Slavic Philology of the University of Vienna from April 6 to 8, 1972.

The following participants attended: official representatives of the Committees of Slavists of Austria (J. Hamm), Finland (M. Widnäs), France (E. Decaux), the German Democratic Republic (H. Zikmund), Great Britain (R.F.L. Bancroft), Hungary (L. Hadrovics), Italy (A. Cantarini), Norway (A. Gallis), Poland (M. Szymczak) and the United States (G. Hüttl-Worth); the national Committee of Austria (O. Back, J. Breu, G. Neweklowsky) as well as unofficial rapporteurs for Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia. The minutes were taken by Dr. R. Preinerstorfer (Vienna). It was noted with regret that the Committees of Slavists of some countries which play an important role in the study of Slavic languages were not able to send representatives to the meeting.

The representatives of the following countries asked to be excused: Belgium (Backvis), Bulgaria (Andrejč^Vin), Denmark (Surland), Federal Republic of Germany (Koschmieder, Mangold), Rumania (Patrut), Sweden (Kjellberg), Switzerland (Schröder), USSR (AN SSSR) and Yugoslavia (Koneski, Ivić and Paveš^Vić).

Special contributions were submitted in writing by Cl. Backvis (Belgium), J.S.G. Simmons (Great Britain), B. Collinder and G. Jacobsson (both Sweden).

The Meeting provided a valuable opportunity for an exchange of experiences and opinions concerning practical and theoretical questions of the transcription of Slavic languages. This was also the topic of a number of reports and papers delivered by the participants:

(1) Reports on transcription practices in the various countries (delivered by the representatives and rapporteurs of the abovementioned twelve countries), O. Back, J. Breu, E. Decaux, A. Gallis, M. Widnas, H. Zikmund.

(2) Papers:

Otto Back: Differences in Transcription between Languages with Roman and Cyrillic Alphabets and Related Problems.

Josef Breu: The Present State of the Endeavours to Create Generally Recognized Systems for the Transcription of Cyrillic Alphabets.

Etienne Decaux:

(a) Généralités sur la transcription et la translitération.

(b) Le rapprochement des alphabets des aveugles slaves.

Arne Gallis: Theory and Practice of the Transcription of Russian Proper Names in the Media in Norway (translations, newspapers, etc.)

Maria Widnas: The Vowels a, a, o and y in Russian Transcription.

Hans Zikmund:

(a) The present state of the work involved in the elaboration of guidelines for the uniform German transcription of Cyrillic Russian proper names in the German Democratic Republic.

(b) The names of the territorial administrative units of the Soviet Union.

The paper on the Braille systems and their Slavic transcription (E. Decaux) was received with great interest and approval. On the first day the chair was held by J. Hamm and A. Gallis, on the second day by L. Hadrovics and E. Decaux, and on the third day by M. Szymczak.

As a result of the discussions and on the basis of various proposals and counter-proposals the following resolutions were adopted:

A. On the Transliteration System according to ISO Recommendation R 9 - 1968:

(1) The transliteration of the Russian letter Ъ should be reviewed and, if possible, altered so that Ъ is rendered by one sign (by ' or ') rather than by a double apostrophe (see ISO R 9 - 1968, page 5, item 27).

Reasons: In linguistics the apostrophe generally indicates the palatalization of the preceding consonant (see item 29 where ' is correctly used for Ъ). The Russian Ъ, however, is merely a separation symbol which may - without prejudice to intelligibility be rendered by the straight vertical sign which is found on all typewriters. Thus: ОБЪЯВЛЕНИЕ - ob'javlenie and not ob"javlenie, also Macedonian 'rga and not "'rga.

- (2) All the other Cyrillic-Latin letter equivalents which ISO Recommendation R9 of September 1968 (including the modifications on page 8) lists for the Slavic Cyrillic alphabets are accepted without reservation.

B. On the Soviet Transliteration System according to GOST 16876-71:

The Latin transcription for the Russian alphabet laid down in GOST 16876/71 of April 6, 1971 and effective in the USSR as of January 1, 1972 is believed to have contributed greatly - within the given technical possibilities - towards facilitating international telecommunications. Its value is furthermore enhanced by annotation 2, page 2, which is also accepted in its entirety without any reservations.

The possibility, envisaged in item 2, page 1, of using the ISO transliteration for libraries is considered a further asset. It is suggested that the ISO transliteration be used in international cartography as well.

The Commission will be able to consider more comprehensive recommendation in connexion with the Soviet Standard only after sufficient experience has been gathered on the practical implementation of the provisions of the Standard both inside and outside the Soviet Union.^{x/}

^{x/} While the communiqué was drafted Mr. J. Breu informed the chairman of the Transcription Commission of the International Committee of Slavists of the contents of a letter sent to him on April 7, 1972 by the Kartografičeskij naučno-informacionnyj centr, Moskva, and signed by A. Komkov, Head of the Department of Geographical Names. The paragraph pertinent to the Meeting reads as follows: "In your circular ... you wrote that Soviet Standard GOST 16876-71 had been published. You do not probably know that its coming into force has been postponed, since this document, as it appeared, had not been agreed upon with some of the organizations concerned. I have the honor to inform you officially that it was scheduled to be remade by July of 1973."

C. On the Polish Transliteration System according to
PN-70/N-01201:

It is appreciated that the Polish slavists have worked out and submitted to the Transcription Commission of the International Committee of Slavists Standard PN-70/N-01201, a comprehensive system for the transliteration of Slavic languages with Cyrillic scripts into the Latin alphabet.

Fundamentally this system is in compliance with ISO Recommendation R 9-1968. However, the following remarks seem indicated:

- (1) It would be preferable to render Cyrillic x by h (according to table 1, item 22) rather than by ch (according to variant ISO R 9, page 5, footnote 3).
- (2) As far as the rendering of ѣ is concerned a modification in accordance with Resolution A would be desirable.
- (3) Moreover, it would be necessary to discuss the question of whether variants should be provided in compliance with ISO R 9, table 2, footnote 1, for those cases in which the linguistic peculiarities of Ukrainian should be taken into account (e.g., for и - Latin y rather than Latin i; for Cyrillic і - Latin i rather than Latin ï).

D. On Transcription for Other than Scientific Purposes
(journalism, literature):

- (1) Rules for the transcription of words, especially of names, which are taken over from Cyrillic-script languages into literary and journalistic contexts of Latin-script languages fall fully within the competence of the national bodies responsible for orthographic questions in the respective Latin-script language.
- (2) Names taken over from one Slavic language into another Slavic language should not be changed too much to fit the respective linguistic system, and any such modifications should be phonetically consistent.

E. On Transcription in Reference Books on a National Level:

- (1) It is recommended to the Transcription Commissions of the various countries to include in the national orthographic reference books tables for the transliteration of the Russian alphabet in accordance with ISO R 9-1968/GOST 16876-71 and to adopt this transliteration for telecommunications.
- (2) The results so far obtained of the efforts made in various countries (e.g. Norway) to standardize and improve the rendering of Cyrillic proper names are appreciated. Linguistic research institutions in the various countries are called upon to carry on and intensify such efforts. In this connexion particular attention should be paid to the correct (though nationally slightly modified) pronunciation of the transliterated names, above all in the mass media.

F. On the Rendering of Proper Names from the Soviet Union:

The Committee of Slavists of the Soviet Union is requested to examine in how far research and publication activities in the Soviet Union and its Union Republics can be intensified so as to make possible the unequivocal and correct written and oral transference of proper names of all types into languages spoken outside the Soviet Union.

(Publication of pronunciation and spelling dictionaries for proper names, lists of territorial administrative units and of proper names of all types with indication of correct stress and use of the letter ë, with indication of original forms in the case of non-Russian proper names and reference to the morphological structure of extended or derived forms of proper names).

G. On the Sequence of Letters:

From the point of view of the librarian as well as for other practical reasons it would be desirable to devise a uniform, systematically arranged alphabet for all Slavic languages.

Thus, in a Latin-script language ch is found between cg and ci, whereas in other languages it is treated as a separate letter following after h; in the Cyrillic-script languages Russians and Ukrainians write ч whereas White Russians use шч; in Macedonian К follows Т, ф follows А.

It seems that for the time being the most practical solution would be to concentrate on achieving uniformity in respect of the Latin-script languages.

The Commission will continue the work taken up at the Institute of Slavic Philology of the University of Vienna and carry on its efforts to compile and publish a bibliography on the problem of the transcription of Slavic languages in co-operation with the Committees of Slavists of the individual countries as well as with other interested institutions.

On April 6 the Mayor of the City of Vienna gave a lunch at the Rathauskeller in honour of the Commission. On April 7 the foreign participants were guests of the Commission at Grinzing.

On Saturday evening the chairman, Prof. Dr. M. Szymczak, thanked all the participants for their co-operation and expressed his gratitude to the hosts.

The Transcription Commission of the International Committee of Slavists will, on the occasion of the Seventh International Congress of Slavists in Warsaw (August 22 to 28, 1973), hold an administrative meeting in which a report on previous activities will be given. Moreover, the date, place and main topic of the next international scientific meeting of the Commission will be fixed.

The Chairman of
the Transcription Commission

(o. Prof. Dr. J. Hamm)

Vienna, April 8, 1972