

Council led to a compromise. The Council requested the *Ad Hoc* Group of Experts set up at Geneva to carry on the functions that had been recommended for the Permanent Committee, thus avoiding the creation of a new United Nations body, and requested the Secretary-General of the United Nations to consult with the Group of Experts on the holding of the next conference not earlier than 1971.

The machinery is now in being. The atmosphere for co-operation is cordial. The matter is in our hands. The first regional conference on the standardization of

names in the Americas is now nearly concluded. We are on our way.

In a co-operative programme based on international acceptance of nationally standardized names, what happens in each country is important to all other countries. Each is both a national standardizer and an international acceptor and must help the others in each of those capacities. Each must have a genuine and continuing concern with the acceptance of standard names at all levels from the locality to the world.

INTERNATIONAL STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES: THE 1967 CONFERENCE*

Report presented by the United States of America

The United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names that was held in Geneva from 4 to 22 September 1967 differed in significant respects from all of the many previous meetings at which the subject had been considered.¹

Discussion of the standardization of geographical names at international meetings goes back almost a century to the first congress in the series of which this is the twenty-first, the Congress of Geographic, Cosmographic and Commercial Sciences held at Amsterdam from 14 to 22 August 1871. The subject was discussed at subsequent International Geographical Congresses and has been taken up at many international meetings held under other auspices.

Four features, however, made the 1967 Conference new and significantly different. It was the first conference of world-wide scope devoted entirely to the subject. It was attended principally by professional name-standardizers, people technically competent in the subject and associated with official national name-standardizing bodies or with international organizations having a stake in the matter. It was deliberately designed to facilitate world-wide exchange of national experience with the problems of the standardization of geographical names, the identification of the extent and degree of consensus and of differences, the exploration of steps to extend the consensus further, and the development of international machinery for international co-operation in this sphere. Finally, the Conference was preceded by preparatory meetings, discussions and world-wide circulation of proposals for study and comment by Governments, followed by collation and circulation of the comments received.

There are great differences between a conference devoted to a specific subject and one at which that subject is only one of many. To begin with, the objectives are usually different. The single-subject conference usually aims at exploration in depth, the identification of a central problem and its ramifications,

solutions applicable to specific problems, or something similar that involves principally group participation and group accomplishment during the meeting. The one with many subjects usually emphasizes reports on recent research by individuals, and to a lesser extent reports on activities by committees or groups. When the subject is one of many, it usually gets only a small fraction of the total time, either in formal sessions, or in the informal discussions in the corridors and lounges or at coffee-breaks and meals or in working-group sessions that hammer out proposals. The small amount of time it does get may be further split up in ways that make exploration in depth difficult if not impossible. The contributions are likely to be reports on research and thinking done long before the contributor came to the meeting, rather than group conclusions arising from joint examination of a problem at the meeting. The two kinds of meetings are likely to be structured quite differently. When meetings are structured to permit almost anyone to talk about almost anything, that is usually what happens. The people who go are largely self-selected and they talk on subjects of their choice. This produces a heterogeneous group with a wide variety of interests. Some people have been known to give papers simply so that they could be sent to the meetings. In contrast, the presentation of papers had little if anything to do with who attended the 1967 Conference. No one read any papers aloud. More than 80 papers and reports were distributed, studied and referred to, but these were not necessarily written by persons attending the Conference. Governments were asked particularly to send the people most closely concerned with the standardization of geographical names, and generally did so, but expertise was drawn upon wherever it was to be found. More than 80 per cent of those attending were professional and technical people, concerned in practical ways with the matters discussed, and were able to draw upon some experience in the field.

At the 1967 Conference attention was directed continuously at the subject for three weeks; ramifications were explored at length; arguments were presented and weighed, accepted or rebutted, revised and incorporated into new positions; alternatives were compared, and a consensus developed point by point. The deliberate

* The original text of this paper, prepared by Meredith F. Burrill, was contained in document E/CONF.61/L.54.

¹ The *Report of the Conference* was published in 1968 as volume 1 of *United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.68.I.9).

structuring of the meetings to facilitate this contributed in no small measure to the successful outcome.

The Conference did not have to start at the very beginning in its consideration of the problems. A large amount of preparatory work had already been done. A Group of Experts on Geographical Names was convened in 1960 by the Secretary-General of the United Nations pursuant to resolution 715 A (XXVII) of the Economic and Social Council. The Group was asked "(i) to consider the technical problems of domestic standardization of geographical names, including the preparation of a statement of the general and regional problems involved, and to prepare draft recommendations for the procedures, principally linguistic, that might be followed in the standardization of their own names by individual countries; (ii) to report to the Council . . . on the desirability of holding an international conference on this subject. . .". The report of the Group was circulated a few months later by the Secretary-General and was subsequently published in volume 7 of *World Cartography*. It was widely studied and commented upon before the 1967 Conference was called. A tentative agenda and a statement on the nature and scope of the proposed conference were also circulated. In 1966 the available members of the Group of Experts, with some additional help, assisted in the preparations for the Conference, incorporating all suggestions made by member states to the Secretary-General, and adapting procedures used at United Nations conferences to the objectives and probable composition of this one.² The antecedents of these developments between 1953 and 1962 were outlined in *World Cartography*, vol. 7, and will not be detailed here. Suffice it to say that in this period there was formulated and generally accepted a simple conceptual base for international co-operation in the standardization of geographical names. The question posed in 1871 was whether the Congress could lay down the adoption of a uniform orthography of proper names both on maps and in geographical treatises. The answer suggested then was that among Roman-alphabet countries all could and should write names as spelt in the country where the named entity was. However, long discussion failed to bring agreement on the difficult problems of a "phonetic system", and the question was referred to the next Congress. Pronunciation was then, and continued to be, the Gordian knot that repeated attempts failed to untie. The knot was finally cut by acknowledging that uniform pronunciation is not possible, but that accepting variation in pronunciation makes possible the acceptance of uniform writing within a given writing system. This in turn made feasible the international acceptance of nationally standardized written names.

When one starts from this simple conceptual base and goes about the business of national standardizing and international accepting, things rapidly become more complicated. It was the basic purpose of the Conference to illuminate these complications. The specific objectives of the Conference³ were:

"(a) Removal of any remaining doubt that nationally standardized names are the proper basis for international standardization and that an international alphabet is not feasible;

"(b) Development of a greater willingness on the part of each country to take account, in its standardization programme, of the problems that other countries might encounter in receiving and assimilating those geographical names for their own use. This process would involve, on the part of the donor country, all the elements of the original scripts and other linguistic details necessary for proper conversion into other scripts;

"(c) Comparison of problems and programmes of various countries;

"(d) Identification of topics, areas and categories of names which currently merit further study, and formulation of principles relating to international standardization;

"(e) Formulation of principles applying to the transfer from one writing system to another;

"(f) Romanization from other writing systems for international standardization to be sought from the United Nations Roman-alphabet languages: English, French and Spanish;

"(g) Consideration to be given to the establishment of systems for international standardization based on the Cyrillic alphabet and the Arabic alphabet;

"(h) Identification and discussion of categories of names of features extending beyond the sovereignty of a single country, e.g. oceans, rivers, mountains, under-sea features etc., and examination of possibilities of standardization;

"(i) Development of machinery for international exchange of information;

"(j) Proposals for the establishment of a programme of regional conferences or working groups to operate after the Geneva Conference;

"(k) Promotion of the establishment of names standardization bodies in all countries."

These objectives were essentially achieved, and since final answers were not expected there was no feeling of frustration if they were not forthcoming on any particular question. Progress was registered on nearly every matter considered, and plans for making more progress were agreed upon.

Four committees were formed, one each to deal with national standardization, geographical terms, writing systems and international co-operation. Since the committees did not meet at the same time, all could participate in their discussions. Special working and drafting groups were formed by volunteers representing very well the range of opinions or viewpoints. Each committee developed a series of resolutions in its particular field of study. All actions taken by the Conference were unanimous. It is indicative of the enthusiastic spirit of co-operation generated at the Conference that the two resolutions considered most important related to the maintenance of the momentum that had been gained. The first resolution called for establishment of a United

² See annex III of the *Report of the Conference*.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

Nations permanent committee of geographical names experts "to provide for continuous co-ordination and liaison among nations to further the standardization of geographical names and to encourage the formation and work of regional groups. . .". An *ad hoc* group was set up to function in the interim. The second resolution recommended the convening of the second conference not later than 1970. These two resolutions duly came before the Economic and Social Council at its spring meeting in May 1968, and were approved in slightly altered form. The group of experts set up at Geneva was asked to continue to carry out the functions proposed, and the Secretary-General was asked to consult with the group with a view to holding the second conference in 1971.

The Group of Experts was set up to include "representatives" of major world linguistic/geographic groups, with the following 14 suggested:

- Anglo-American
- Latin American
- United Kingdom–Australia–New Zealand
- German-speaking and Dutch-speaking countries
- Norden
- Romance-language Europe
- East central and south-eastern Europe
- Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
- Arabic group
- South-West Asia other than Arabic
- Indian group
- South-East Asia
- East Asia
- Africa south of the Sahara

Other resolutions adopted by the Conference called for the exchange of information on automatic data processing; for the establishment of a names authority in every country; for the provision of a document centre at the United Nations and for exchange of publications; for the use of technical assistance; for the convening of regional conferences and discussions; for attempts by countries sharing geographical entities to agree on a single name and spelling; for active co-operation with international oceanographic organizations; for continuing attempts to arrive at agreement on romanization systems; for the retention of the accents and diacritical signs used in Roman-alphabet languages and for the provision of vowels and other diacritical marks in Arabic; for agreement on either one romanization system for Arabic or the dual use of French-based and English-based systems; for the use of the romanization systems proposed by Iran and Thailand to render names from Persian and Thai; for consideration by the Group of Experts of the adoption of the Wade-Giles system as the system for romanizing Chinese names and of the system to be adopted by Ethiopia for romanizing Amharic; for special attention to be given to unwritten names in Africa; and for continuing attention to semantic aspects of the latter.

Most of the problems on which a consensus was not reached were referred to the Group of Experts for further exploration.

The 1967 Conference demonstrated again the ability and readiness of the professional community to co-

operate. In a paper on the Conference, a member of the Soviet delegation commented that, while one could not expect that such an important problem as the standardization of geographical names, full of contradictions and unexpected difficulties, could be solved by a single conference—that would require the efforts of all countries and a time-span of many decades—it was important to note that the participants could come to an understanding on certain principles, inform each other about the state of research and progress, establish contacts and plan future projects.⁴

While individual geographers have always played a leading part in the standardization of geographical names, much of the development in the last two decades has taken place outside the framework of regular organized geographical activity, for several reasons.

Geographical names are phenomena of language applied to phenomena of geography, and significant advances in understanding have followed active co-operation in teams by geographers and linguists. The required release of mental set was more easily accomplished by such teams than by single disciplines. As the author pointed out in his presidential address to the Association of American Geographers,⁵ our systems of individual and collective behaviour in manipulating our mother tongue and in dealing with the structure of organized knowledge are largely subconscious. Resistance to modification in such systems and structures is a natural protection against chaos, but it produces a mental set that tends to inhibit the reception of new truth. The inhibition is reinforced when the concepts with which the new ones are incompatible are considered basic in the structure. It is further reinforced when the old ones are institutionalized in disciplinary credos. The release or yielding of mental set follows recognition of this, as sophistication in a given area of knowledge-plus-belief replaces naïveté, and release at one point makes release at other points easier. New doors and windows open.

The world of learning, of which geography is a part, cannot deal effectively with today's issues without using some new concepts. We shall need them even more to deal with tomorrow's massive new problems of world living and communicating. It could well be that geographers will find the experience of dealing with geographical names rewarding in unexpected ways.

What can a geographer usefully do at this stage in the matter of the standardization of geographical names? First, he should find out, if he does not know already, whether his country has an official name-standardizing body. If there is none, he can join with the United Nations Group of Experts in pressing for establishment of one, noting the pertinent recommendations of the 1967 Conference (resolution 4, "National standardization"). Where there is such an official agency, the geographer should establish contact with its officers and identify where

⁴ E. M. Murzayev, "Stabilizatsia Geograficheskikh Nazvaniy", *Bulletins of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, Geography Series*, No. 4, (1968), pp. 124-128.

⁵ *The Language of Geography*, vol. 58, No. 1 (March 1968), pp. 1-11.

geographers individually and as a group can fit into the agency's programme. If the geographer will also make his interest known to the Group of Experts, information can be brought to his attention from several sources. He can be advised, for example, of plans or proposals for regional conferences or discussions and how he may have a part in them. Suggested research activities for geographers include inquiry into the nature of named geographical entities and the various meanings of words used to designate those features, the investigation of

human behaviour in name-giving and name-using in their own countries, and exchange and critical examination of the information resulting from such studies.

One cannot study named entities very long without encountering new concepts and having one's mental set jolted. The investigation of human behaviour will have to be one of the significant developments of the immediate future in geography, and techniques developed or tested in name research may have broad application. At the very least it will be interesting in itself.

THE 1:2,500,000 WORLD MAP AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE FOR THE INTERNATIONAL STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES*

Report presented by Bulgaria

In many instances maps are the basic source for establishing geographical names, both with regard to their linguistic structure, exact graphical presentation and phonetic value, and with regard to the geographical location of the objects to which they refer.

There is a strong link and interdependence between toponymy and cartography. In many cases they help and supplement each other, which has of late led to the setting up of such distinct intermediary disciplines as cartographic toponymy and Toponymic Cartography.

It should be noted that every major cartographic work on the territory of a given country has marked a certain stage in the study of the toponymy of that territory. This important link between toponymy and cartography is the object of ever more frequent and more profound investigations on the part of linguists, cartographers and geographers.¹ Many of the problems of this reciprocal link are the object of articles in the periodical press on linguistics, cartography and geography. All this is an eloquent justification of the belief that a deeper interpenetration between the disciplines studying geographical names and cartography, as well as a wider application of the methods and achievements of the two groups of sciences, could be very useful.

THE WORLD MAP ON THE SCALE 1:2,500,000— A UNIQUE CARTOGRAPHICAL WORK

In examining the standardization of geographical names on a planetary scale, it is expedient to turn our attention to cartographic works which embrace the whole planet. In this respect the World Map² is unique for our times. The major reasons for its exceptionally great significance are these.

* The original text of this paper, prepared by B. R. Koen, President of the Council of Orthography and Transcription of Geographical Names, was contained in document E/CONF.61/L.94.

¹ Among studies published in the last few years we should like to mention E. I. Pospelov, *Toponymy and Cartography* (Moscow, 1971); Josef Breu, "Cartography and toponymy", paper read at the Fourth International Conference on Cartography, Stresa, 1970; and Josef Breu, *Die Transkription in der Kartographie* (Vienna, 1970).

² Bulgaria, the German Democratic Republic, Romania, Poland, Hungary, the USSR and Czechoslovakia took part in the work on the preparation of the map.

1. The map covers the whole territory of our planet both the dry land and the oceans.

2. The World Map is a comparatively detailed map, endeavouring to depict the whole planet with equal accuracy and completeness on a comparatively large scale (the map consists of 234 sheets).

3. In its content and its illustrative style, the World Map is a homogeneous cartographic work.

4. The World Map is nearing completion. More than 188 map sheets—80.5 per cent of the map—have already been printed. It is planned to be completed in 1974. This means that even now the map constitutes a sound basis for a number of studies of a general planetary character. Apart from this, the comparatively rapid composition and publication of the map guarantee its contemporary accuracy and chronological unity.

5. Of significance for the problem under examination here is the fact that the map contains a large number of geographical names, which have been written in accordance with scientifically based and strictly observed principles. In countries which do not use the Roman alphabet, the names are in most cases romanized according to a system officially adopted or in wide-spread use for the purpose.

These qualities demonstrate eloquently that the map could be used to advantage for a number of purposes connected with the study of our planet and, naturally, with the study of geographical names over extensive territories.

THE ROLE OF THE WORLD MAP IN THE STUDY AND STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

The geographical names³ included so far in the map, as well as the fact that they were being represented according to not merely nationally but universally valid principles, long ago prompted the makers of the map to plan for their rational utilization. The international editorial board of the World Map took a decision and

³ The Map is planned to contain more than 400,000 names. The gazetteers accompanying the *Atlas Mira* ("World Atlas") and *The Times Atlas* — two of the world's most complete geographical reference books — contain respectively 205,000 and 345,000 geographical names.