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ROMANIZATION GUIDE

Paper submitted by the Government of the
United States of America

Czechoslovak delegation is fully in favour of the acceptance of the suggestion of the Hungarian delegation concerning the use of the Pinyin system for the transcription of Chinese geographical names, even though Chinese names have up to now been given here in the transcription system laid down by Czech sinologists in 1952.

The Czechoslovak delegation considers the suggestion fully recommendable for further implementation.

ROMANIZATION GUIDE 1972*

Report presented by the United States of America

PRINCIPLES OF ROMANIZATION*

Report presented by Hungary

The First United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names already showed that the most extensive discussion was on the question of romanization. The Chairman of Commission III at that conference expressed views on the so-called receiver principle, according to which the receivers (in this case countries using the Roman alphabet) should determine the system adopted for international standardization. However, a considerable opposition could already then be seen, as shown by the memorandum submitted by nine countries (published as Working Paper 5 of the 1970 meeting of the Group of Experts) which stated that "... a final decision on romanization for international use should be based on international agreement, and that, of course, includes participation and final consent and acceptance by the users of the donor system as well". This shows clearly that the receiver principle is unacceptable.

Of the resolutions of the First United Nations Conference, Nos. 13 and 14 dealt with the romanization systems for Iranian and Thai geographical names. Both resolutions approved a system for international use which was suggested by the countries concerned, i.e. by the donor. This shows the practical significance of the donor principle.

Our country agrees, therefore, to the principles expressed by J. Breu in his Circular No. 1 of 23 June 1970:

"If a country using a non-Roman alphabet has officially introduced a transcription of this alphabet and uses it practically, especially on maps, we ought to recommend this transcription for international cartographic use.

"If a country uses officially different transliterations for different applications, we should recommend that transcription which is officially used in cartography, or—if no transcription is used in cartography—which is linguistically the better one.

"If in the country concerned no official transcription has been introduced, we ought to recommend the transcription of the International Organization of Standardization (ISO) as being that of the competent international committee.

"If there does not exist an ISO transcription either, we ought to recommend that transcription which is used internationally by linguists."

At the same time we are of the opinion that the principles quoted above and agreed to should be supplemented by another item after the first paragraph, as follows:

"If there is more than one transcription system in a country, or none at all, then the Group of Experts, or the Cartographic Section of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, or the regional group concerned, should seek to make contact with the official organizations responsible or supposed to be responsible for transcription matters, in order to urge on them the selection or creation of such a system. All procedures expressed in the next paragraphs could only be followed if such a contact proved impossible to establish, or there were no prospect of the creation of a transcription system."