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Statement on Romanization

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## STATEMENT ON ROMANIZATION

The year that passed since our last meeting in New York showed a considerable increase in the activities of the working group on romanization. Although much has been achieved in this field the problem on the whole remains far from final accomplishment. First of all I want to give my views on different questions touched upon in the relevant papers, which were considered of principal importance.

In the first place it should be emphasized that after approval of guidelines on romanization of individual languages for international use different national romanizations that have been worked out in conformity with each language will remain in existence. As was rightly noted in the Memorandum of the delegations of Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Finland, Federal Republic of Germany, Hungary, Luxemburg and Switzerland addressed to the Chairman of Committee III at the Geneva meeting (21.9.67), the status of those national transliteration systems is in general comparable to that of conventional names.

In the second place, we cannot completely agree with the standpoint of the USA and Great Britain delegations expressed in the working paper No. 4 submitted to the last meeting in New York. We do not object to the general views formulated in this paper (references 1-4). However, the conclusion that a romanization based on the practice of English-speaking countries is the most acceptable and practical can hardly be considered well-grounded. Completed as

they are the rules of the reference 5 infringe upon interests of minor nationalities and states. An anglicized system of romanization of non-Roman-writing alphabets is unacceptable as an international standard as well as a system based on any other Roman-writing language. We consider that a romanization based on phonetic values of Roman characters in Slavonic Roman-writing languages is much more acceptable as an international one for romanization of Slavonic non-Roman-writing languages. We stated this view in the paper submitted to the last New York meeting (WP 26).

In the third place, while preparing romanization guidelines for international use it should be proceeded not from writing tradition in general but from peculiarities of individual languages. Hence we cannot agree with the view of <sup>ISO</sup> ~~the ISO Commission~~ when ~~stating~~ stating necessity of unambiguous romanization of Cyrillic letters irrespective of peculiarities of individual languages (Circular 1, of the member from Austria, June 23, 1970, ref.5). For example, the letter "И" of Russian and Bulgarian represents the different consonants ( / И / and /ИТ / respectively) and it would be incorrect to represent it by the same Roman one.

Thus, in the exchange of views the often reiterated opinion was reaffirmed that the concept of "romanization" is to some extent abstract as one cannot speak of the Latin alphabet forgetting individual Roman-writing languages whose alphabets are characterized by : 1) different sets of characters; 2) different phonetic values of the same

character in different languages; 3) different phonetic values of the same characters in the same language; 4) different sets of diacritics.

We might not repeat all these well-known things if the choice of one or another romanization of non-Roman-writing languages as an international standard would not mean the preference of one Roman-writing language to the detriment of the rest since any of existing romanizations (save the ISO system) is in any case attached to a certain language.

One cannot as well speak of romanization of a certain kind of script, to say the Cyrillic one, since different languages using it are characteristic of distinctive features just as Roman-writing languages.

As to working out individual romanization of Russian names and those of the Soviet republics, whose alphabets were based on the Russian one, this problem, through more detailed study, appeared to raise additional difficulties. Unfortunately we were unable to give much consideration to this problem due to the task we considered more important for us, viz.: to reconsider the rules of transfer into Russian of Soviet languages and those of other countries and to work out the rules of representing Russian and other Soviet languages as well as foreign ones in different Soviet languages. The latter problem is especially urgent since for the first time edition of national encyclopaedias in Soviet languages were recently embarked on while national maps increase in their amount. Therefore our main attention and efforts were aimed at these problems. However, we re-

cognize importance and urgency of the romanization problem for the purposes of the world cartography and the world exchange of scientific information.

We mean to accomplish the research work and develop our proposals on romanization of Russian names during this year, and during the next two years to work out romanizations of other Soviet languages. After accomplishment of this work we mean to prepare and approve the state standards which will be recommended for international use.

The complicated problem of romanization has so many different aspects and provokes so many conflicting views that the following proposal seems to us the most advantageous:

1. If a country has its own ready and officially approved romanization of its place-names it should be accepted for international use just in the same way as we accepted the romanizations of Amharic, Thai and Persian at the Geneva meeting.

2. Where an official romanization of a country with a non-Roman alphabet is different from that of the ISO the latter should agree its romanization with that of the country concerned and take into account the amendments this country will desire to introduce.

3. Where there is no officially approved romanization we should recommend that the country itself work out it or take part in similar work of the international bodies

( the ISO and Ad Hoc Group of Experts on geographical names).

4. We should recommend that countries speaking cognate languages and using the same writing tradition agree upon controversial points as far as possible and work out their romanizations in the same type. Such regional agreements would make much easier problems of international standardization.

We consider that such an approach to the problem is the most unbiased, just and practicable.