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**Dictionary of Geographical Names of the Baltic States and
the Commonwealth of Independent States**

Submitted by Germany**

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The geographical names of the Baltic Republics of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, of the Russian Federation (with its autonomous Republics) and of the eleven other Republics of the Commonwealth of Independent States constitute a nearly unlimited amount of linguistic units. These units are monosyllabic or polysyllabic words, simplex names or compound names, they are nouns or adjectives, they represent proper names alone or in connection with generic terms, they are standardized or nonstandardized namens, they are endonyms or exonyms, they have full or abbreviated forms, can be old names or only recently introduced ones. The geographical names exist in oral, spoken or written versus printed form, so that they can be also converted into a graphic and orthographic system of another language. Their printed forms exist in maps and atlases, in encyclopedias, gazetteers and in all sorts of texts. Nowadays these forms can also be represented in a digital form – on maps or as a data base. In lists they can be arranged in the normal way of the alphabetic order of a certain language, in a mixed way by the use of more than one alphabet or in an inverse way. The original names can be adapted to another language to a more or less adequate degree – with regard to their spelling and to their pronunciation.

A dictionary of geographical names for international use ought to be multilingual and multialphabetic, containing the names in their endonym forms with aids to pronunciation. It would be a comprehensive basic dictionary that could be used only by persons understanding und speaking the languages concerned for the sake of making dictionaries for users of a special target language.

The content of the dictionary was limited to the territories of the Republics of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). The decision to include the most relevant geographical names of the Baltic Republics is based on the fact that their geographical names cannot be found in the above mentioned “Duden-Wörterbuch geographischer Namen Europa” of 1966, since in that publication the Soviet Union had not yet been taken into consideration.

The geographical names included in the dictionary exist as officially approved forms in different typefaces. The letters for writing or printing them belong to a range of alphabets of the Roman, Cyrillic, Georgian and Armenian script; so all of them had to be taken into account.

Certain problems arise with regard to adopting and using the geographical names in German not only with the view of their original form, their transcription and pronunciation, but also referring to the word formation, their translation, their reconstruction, the exonymization, the attribution of gender, case and number, and last but not least to the type of German spelling to be applied to them.

The Roman alphabets in which the Estonian, Karelian, Latvian and Lithuanian, more recently also the Moldovian, Azerbaijan, Turkmen, Uzbek, Tatarian and in future possibly also the Kyrgyz and Kazakh geographical names respectively will be written, must in German texts be reproduced unchanged, namely by using their total number of additional letters and diacritics. This is nowadays after all possible on the basis of the existence and world wide availability of UNICODE font sets in newly accessible text processing programmes on powerful computers.

Since the letters of the non-Roman alphabets concerned remain unidentifiable to everyone who is not acquainted with them, it seems to be appropriate to reproduce these letters by means of conversion into the Roman alphabet, i. e. to **transliterate** them by making use not only of the 26 letters of the

basic Roman alphabet but also of all the range of special other letters and of the diacritics in order to have the possibility of restoring the original spellings concerned, i. e. to retransliterate them unambiguously. The systems made use of in the dictionary are based on the prescriptions for their application in the catalogues of the German and Austrian libraries since the end of the 19 century. In addition to this application the dictionary takes also into account the standard GOST 1983 in its up to date shape of 1998 approved by the Seventh UN Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names (by presentation of the two Russian Cyrillic letters *х* and *э* not only as *ch* and *é* but also as *h* and *è*).

For German-speaking users the dictionary presents the German **transcription** of the Russian geographical names in two varieties – in the traditional one and in a more precise one. The new version of German transcription more exactly reflects the Cyrillic original spelling on the one hand and promotes a more adequate German pronunciation of the names in accordance with their original pronunciation on the other hand. This new way of German transcription is also – for the first time - applied to the transcription of all the non-Russian (Ukrainian, Belorussian, Kasakh, Armenian, Georgian and so on) geographical names in Cyrillic and other non-Roman script.

Since the original, the transliterated and the transcribed name forms do not per se give sufficient hints on their correct **pronunciation**, the user is dependent on helping advice, on pronunciation aids. In principle, this help could be given by the means of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), as it is made use of in the “Duden-Wörterbuch geographischer Namen Europa” from 1966. The present situation, however, does not allow a perfect application of its means with regard to all the languages we had to deal with. So we decided to rely on the help which provides the German transcription of the names by sole marking the stressed syllable of the polysyllable words. The observance of the proper stressing is often more important than a most adequate articulation of some single sounds or some combinations of sounds that constitute a name. Some generally valid rules for stressing the geographical names can be given with regard to the Estonian, Latvian, Armenian, Azerbaijan, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Turkmen, Uzbek and some other languages, but not to the big amount of Russian, Ukrainian, Belorussian, Lithuanian, Moldovian, Georgian and other languages.

In principle, the geographical names are always shaped grammatically, i. e. they are either nouns or adjectives with the grammatical **categories of gender, number and case**, and compound names are performed by rules of word formation. The translation of generic terms of geographical names into other languages has also to take into account the peculiarities of the source language and of the target language. So, the name of the administrative division Орловская область for instance has to be translated correctly into German only as „Gebiet Orjol“. The name of the Russian Federation - Российская Федерация - is not correctly translated into German by „Russische Föderation“ (although its correct English version „Russian Federation“ might have served as its pattern), because the expression „Russische Föderation“ could be retranslated into Russian as „Русская Федерация“ what would be fully unacceptable, since the population in the Federation in mind consists not only of Russians but also of a great majority of other nationalities; therefore the correct German form can only be „Föderation Russland“. In a similar way other wrongly exonymized German names have to be corrected – so the territory name Северный Кавказ does not mean a mountain ridge but a large region, therefore its German counterpart is „Nordkaukasien“ and not „Nordkaukasus“.

In some cases geographical names must not be transcribed into the target language, on contrary they have to be restored in their original form – due to the fact that their Russian forms are already transcribed ones. This is the case for instance with Кроштадт, Гальбштадт, Шлиссельбург in German: „Kronstadt, Halbstadt, Schlüsselburg“ and not „Kronschtadt, Galjbschtadt, Schlisseljburg“. Last but not least have to be taken into account also the so called exonyms, such as „Moskau, Kiew, Sankt Petersburg, Sibirien, Kaukasus“ (instead of „Moskwa, Kyjiu, Sankt-Peterburg, Sibirj, Kawkas“).

In accordance with the recently (1998) regulated German orthography the special letter ß is now written as „ss“ (after letters for short vowels, for instance in „Russland, Fluss, Pass“). In compliance with this new regulation a more correct German transcription of Russian names is offered.

As to the problem of reproducing and using the different shapes of letters in the big amount of Roman and non-Roman alphabets we are nowadays in a good position, because from the beginning of this century we can make use of the UNICODE on the computers with better performed and updated font sets. If we had had these possibilities some years ago, we would have made use of them.

A copy of the dictionary is attached, supplemented by a list of completions and some errata.
