

## 50 YEARS AGO . . .

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In Volume XXV, No. 2 (November 1948), p. 69, the complete text of Circular Letter No. 16-H of 18 September 1948 was published. This Letter followed Circular Letter No. 6-H of 18 September 1947, in which a Draft Proposal on "Geographical Names" was circulated to Member States.

The Draft Proposal was the result of the discussion on a Vth I.H. Conference Proposal made by USA that consideration be given to a uniform policy for handling geographic names on nautical charts and in hydrographic texts.

In the explanatory note to the Proposal, the USA pointed out that: *"it has been noted that Hydrographic Offices tend toward conservatism in changing the form and spelling of geographic names on their issued charts. As a result, there may, within a given area, be numerous differences between place names on the nautical charts and on the topographic sheets of the same country. Where the names employed on the nautical charts represent the best usage of the sovereign countries, they may be freely used by the chart-producing agencies of other countries. Further, if these official names are accepted without change either in spelling or in the geographic generic terms, the work of the States members producing extensive series of charts will be greatly facilitated. It is realised that the subject of geographic names is of interest to numerous government agencies other than Hydrographic Offices, and for this reason it is suggested that an approach toward international uniformity be sought through national agencies having specific jurisdiction."*

The Proposal was finally approved in February 1950, with some amendments. The approved text is given below:

### PROPOSAL

*"With the purpose of obtaining approximate uniformity in the geographic names appearing on the nautical charts and documents of maritime countries, it is recommended that each national Hydrographic Office :*

- 1. On its charts for its own coasts, show names that are in exact agreement with the forms prescribed by its most authoritative source. (Note : each country will thus provide complete and authoritative name coverage in its own official script, whether Roman or non-Roman, for the use of all other national Hydrographic Offices that issue charts of various scales for the same area) .*

2. *On its charts of foreign coasts where the Roman alphabet is official with the sovereign country, show names that are in exact agreement with the most authoritative usage of the country having sovereignty. (Note : it is anticipated that these names may eventually be obtained directly from new and revised editions of the nautical charts of the country having sovereignty).*
3. *On its charts of foreign coasts where the script of the sovereign country is other than the Roman alphabet, show names that are obtained by applying its own authorised transcription systems to the names appearing on the most authoritative sources of the country having sovereignty. (Note : among countries where the Roman alphabet is official, international uniformity in transcription systems should be advantageous to the several national governments. It is accordingly recommended that national Hydrographic Offices present to their Governments the desirability of obtaining uniformity and urge the formulation and adoption of an effective agreement).*
4. *On its charts of all foreign coasts, use for the generic part of complex geographic names the word (in its Roman alphabet form) used by the country having sovereignty. Example : Falsterborev. (Note : by following this practice the geographic generic term will not be translated but will appear in its Roman alphabet form on the charts of all nations).*
5. *On all of its charts, apply its conventional national usage to names of countries, major territorial divisions and boundary features and to the oceans and international subdivisions thereof. (Note : some uniformity in the names and limits of oceans and seas is of advantage to the work of national Hydrographic Offices . The problem of obtaining this uniformity is involved in a separate resolution (see : resolution on the « Limits of Oceans and Seas ») adopted by the Fifth International Hydrographic Conference and will form the subject of a further Circular Letter). »*

