

Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO : Assistant Director for Operations

DATE: 11 October 1948

FROM : Chief, Foreign Documents Branch

SUBJECT: Ad Hoc Committee re Transliteration of Names of Individuals and
Other Unusual Words or Phrases.

1. It has recently come to the attention of this Branch that there is a general lack of uniformity in the transliteration of the names of individuals from the original foreign language into English; as for example, from Russian, Korean, Chinese and Siamese.

2. This lack of uniformity greatly hampers the collection of intelligence and the later assembling of the proper material to publish a biographic report. It has been found that the same individual may be carried under several names, each name thought to represent a separate identity.

3. FBIB has a peculiar problem in the above respect inasmuch as they do not see the written or printed name but are forced to try to get it correctly through merely hearing it spoken over the air. This problem would need special handling.

4. There are many occasions when words or phrases are found that the standard dictionary translation does not appear to give the proper sense or meaning when viewed in the light of the context of the paragraph. These words or phrases also need to be uniformly agreed upon as to meaning and use.

5. To correct the above it is recommended that an ad hoc committee representing as many interested agencies as possible be formed for the purpose of making recommendations to ICAPS as to the character, membership, functions and limitations of a permanent board similar to the presently established and functioning Board on Geographic Names, to the financing of which CIA is a principle contributor. This permanent board to be empowered to decide on the correct spelling of all names and words other than geographic, to publish at frequent intervals lists or cards of approved words, to be recognized by all government agencies as the only official and final authority, and to be directed to make suitable agreements with any similar British or Allied boards for coordination and exchange of information.

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