



NUMBERS IN TOPONYMY

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***Dedication:** This paper is dedicated to my distinguished and greatly treasured colleague, Professor Herman Bell.*

***Abstract:** In examining the role of numbers in toponymy, this paper tackles a subject that has rarely been touched on previously. It notes how numbers, being part of language, naturally also form part of toponymy. For the most part, toponyms incorporating numbers are normal, but some toponyms created arbitrarily with numbers are not at all normal and may even be unwelcome. The paper includes a poignant tale of one person's encounter with the concentration camp at Auschwitz.*

***Key words:** toponymy, numbers, association, commemoration, arbitrary toponyms, Auschwitz*

*In this world one must have a name a name, even if self-bestowed, is better than a number.
Ambrose Bierce, *The Moonlit Road*, 1907*

1. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF NUMBERS

In almost all cultures, the ability to count is more than an adjunct to everyday life; it is an essential component of it. On a daily basis, most of us have the need to measure quantity, or to tot up aggregates, or to place items in a sequence, and all of these tasks require the use of numbers, often expressed in symbolic form through the deployment of numerals. The manner in which different cultures and languages handle numbers varies, but most of us require the capability – in theory at least – to progress increasingly right through towards infinity. Unlike other components of language, though, numbers do not necessarily of themselves convey a meaning (Rose-Redwood, 2006). If we hear the noun ‘despair’ or the adjective ‘red’, there is some immediate understanding of what these words mean, even if they occur in isolation. This is not so with numbers; ‘103’ means very little in itself without some context to accompany it. If



it is the number of runs that a batsman has accrued in an innings of cricket then it is likely to be significant in its own right, but if it is the number of pebbles we have collected from a beach then it is clearly insignificant, at least in relation to the total number of pebbles on that beach. Without context, the number 103 conveys little more than a rather indefinable notion of ‘one-hundred-and-three-ness’.

A simple number can have a very limited application, as on a time-restricted raffle ticket, or it can exude enduring and quite extraordinary power. In the autumn of 1972, as a young man experiencing that unsettling period of uncertainty between leaving university and finding employment, I joined a two-week geography field trip to the Soviet Union. The hotel rooms on the trip were of the twin-bedded variety, so those of us who were travelling singly were obliged to share with a stranger. On arrival at our first hotel, in the city then known as Leningrad, I found myself allocated a room together with a middle-aged gentleman of rather serious disposition. Once in our room, we began by engaging in standard introductory small-talk, but I was soon pulled up short when I happened to glance over as this gentleman was changing his shirt for the evening. For on his left forearm I could see imprinted a tattoo, in the form of a five- or six-digit number (I do not now recall which), and I knew that this could have only one explanation; this person had spent time in a Nazi concentration camp¹.

This tale surely demonstrates the extraordinary power and significance that a number can, in an instant, convey. In this particular case, the significance was due not so much to the actual number itself, in the sense of the quantity or sequential position that it represented, but was instead intrinsic to its very existence on a person’s forearm. The location provided the context; five or six numerals, positioned there together in the form of a number, sent a shiver down the spine of this onlooker as instant testament to a harrowing story of human depravity and misery. Fortunately, in toponymy, the association between place names and numbers is never quite so sinister, though as will be revealed later there are nonetheless occasions on which toponyms containing numbers can still be disturbing.

2. REGULAR TOPONYMS INCORPORATING NUMBERS

Human perception enables us to look at the spaces that surround us on our planet and to identify from them the places and features for which we require the distinctive label of a name. Because numbers form such an integral part of our lives, it is not surprising that numbers also on occasion feature in those names. Most frequently, numbers occur because we have chosen to label a place or feature with a name that involves either some direct association with the feature concerned, or the commemoration of some event of particular significance to those applying the name.

The first of these methods, **naming by association**, is common across all cultures. Counting upwards beginning with ‘nought’, we can find several farm names in South Africa which contain the element ‘cypher’, such as Cypherwater in Northern Cape province and Cypherfontein in Eastern Cape province, with ‘cypher’ equating to ‘zero’. A reasonable assumption here is that these are allusions to the absence of a proper supply of water for the needs of the farm. The number ‘one’ can be seen off the coast of Zhejiang province in eastern China, where there is a small island with the name Yijiangshan Dao [一江山島], which when deconstructed means ‘One River Mountain

¹ Readers interested in learning more of this tale are invited to see the Annex to this paper (Annex 1).

Island'. Examples of the numbers 'two' and 'three' are not difficult to find; we might cite for instance the village of Colombey-les-Deux-Églises in France (the country home of Charles de Gaulle for much of his life), and the city of Trois-Rivières in Quebec, Canada.

The number 'four' can be seen frequently in Turkey in the toponym Dört Yol, a name meaning 'four roads' [*dört* = four; *yol* = road] and usually applied with reference to a settlement located at a crossroads. This use of a crossroads as a basis for naming is common throughout lands with a Turkic culture, and the principle behind it is also a recurring theme across many other cultures too, examples including several instances of the name Quatre-Chemins in Belgium and occasional occurrences of Fourways in southern Africa and Australia. Note from the example of Dört Yol that Turkish nouns frequently remain in singular form following numbers, the presence of the associated number being sufficient in itself to convey the idea of plurality ('roads' would normally be *yollar*). This same characteristic can be seen for example in the Turkish village name Dört Pınar, meaning 'Four Springs'; the word 'springs' in its plural form would normally be *pınarlar*. The region in the United States known as Four Corners is another example of the toponymic use of the number four; this region is named in association with the intersection of latitude and longitude lines where the four states of Utah, Colorado, New Mexico and Arizona all meet (HAMLIN 1999: 239).

The numbers 'five', 'six' and 'seven' can be seen represented respectively by the town of Pyatigorsk [Пятигорск: Five Mountains Town] in Stavropol territory, Russia; the settlement of Shestiozerskiy [Шестиозерский: Six Lakes Settlement] in Arkhangel'sk region, Russia; and the town of Sevenoaks in the United Kingdom county of Kent. As for the number 'eight', there are some thirty instances of the name Eight Mile Creek in Australia. Pyatigorsk, Shestiozerskiy and Sevenoaks are associative in the sense that their names relate to obvious features in the vicinity (there being respectively five mountains, six lakes and – originally – seven oak trees at those locations), while Eight Mile Creek is primarily descriptive in indicating the length of the feature. The south London area known as Nine Elms and the village of Desyatidvorki [Десятидворки: Ten Enclosures] in Russia's Smolensk region complete the set of examples of associative toponyms with numbers up to ten.

Numbers greater than ten are common too, represented for example by the town of Ninety Six in the US state of South Carolina. The meaning behind this name is uncertain; it may possibly reflect distance from another location or it may be a corrupted form of the Welsh-language word *nant-sych*, meaning 'dry gulch'. At the outer limit of numbers, there is a water well with the name Infinity Bore in the arid landscape of Western Australia. Interestingly, the number 'thousand' is most frequently deployed not in any exact sense but rather as a useful approximation for 'many', as seen in the names Thousand Islands (shared between the United States and Canada) and Thousand Springs State Park, in the US state of Idaho (HAMLIN 1999: 238). This approximation approach can also be seen in the Swiss canton of Ticino, where there is a feature known as Centovalli (= One Hundred Valleys) on account of the valley's many (though not exactly one hundred) tributaries.

With regard to associative naming, it is important to bear in mind that not all associations are what they may seem. The two small towns of Neunkirchen (one in Germany's Saarland, the other in Austria) appear to suggest 'Nine Churches', but both are in fact modifications of Neue Kirche (= New Church) and have no connection with the number nine. Similarly, the Ligurian town of Ventimiglia in Italy translates as

Twenty Miles, but this is a coincidence; Ventimiglia is in fact derived from a Roman name for the town, Vintimilium.

The second method, **naming as commemoration**, is – after naming by association – the most frequently occurring reason for the creation of toponyms with numbers. This type of memorial naming is also common across all cultures but, in contrast to naming by association, commemorative names are frequently of a political or religious nature and are therefore likely to be understood properly only within a single nation (if political) or a single culture (if religious), by those who understand the appropriate implications of the name.

Beginning again with ‘nought’, perhaps the most evocative example is seen in the name Ground Zero, used for the site of the World Trade Center in New York City in the aftermath of the destruction of the twin towers in 2001. Written with initial upper-case letters, this name gave toponymic substance to a term usually written entirely in lower-case simply to denote the site of any explosion. The numbers ‘one’ and ‘two’ can be seen respectively in the names One Man Cay, given to a reef situated off the coast of Belize, and Due Santi (= Two Saints), a small village in the Italian region of Umbria. The Three Pioneers is the name of a mountain range in Queensland, Australia, named after three late-nineteenth-century colonial trail-blazers, while ‘four’ can be found in the Swiss body of water known as the Vierwaldstättersee (= Four Forest States Lake²), a name based on the four adjoining cantons which together formed the first Swiss state around the turn of the fourteenth century.

The Soviet Union was a bountiful source of politically commemorative names involving numbers, and some of these have been retained even to this day. Pyatiletka [Пятилетка: ‘Five Year Plan’] is a village in Novosibirsk region, Russia, the name celebrating Soviet efforts at modernisation; there were several such plans from the 1920s right through to the Union’s demise at the end of 1991. As for the number ‘six’, religion forms the basis for the frequent use of the village name Seis de Enero (= Sixth of January) in Mexico, this being the date of the feast of the Holy Family (the Epiphany) in the western Christian calendar. A small village in south Wales named Seven Sisters commemorates the siblings of the nineteenth-century entrepreneur who founded the coal mine on which the settlement was based. The number ‘eight’ is seen in the mountains known as Sierras de Ocho de Agosto (= Eighth of August Hills), located in the Sancti Spíritus province of Cuba. We can find the number ‘nine’ in the name Nueve de Julio (= Ninth of July), which has been given to more than two dozen features in Argentina, this date marking that country’s independence day. For the number ‘ten’ we can return to Russia, which provides us with another political name of Soviet vintage: Desyat’ Let Oktyabrya [Десять Лет Октября: Ten Years of October]. There are instances of this name, which celebrates the tenth anniversary of the Bolshevik revolution of 1917, remaining in the post-Soviet era in Altay territory and Volgograd region.

Commemorative toponyms containing numbers greater than ten are common too, the following examples all being political in nature. Several French towns have a Rue du 14 Juillet (= Fourteenth of July Street) in celebration of the date in 1789 on which the storming of the Bastille in Paris sparked the beginning of the French Revolution (oddly, perhaps, there do not seem to be any instances of that date featuring in the odonymy of central Paris itself). The number ‘fifteen’ features in several Iranian

² This feature has the English conventional name Lake Lucerne.

toponyms, such as a settlement in Īlām province known as Pānzdah-e Khordād [خرداد : پانزده : Fifteenth of Khordād], this being the date which commemorates an unsuccessful June 1963 uprising against the rule of the Shah (the date 15th Khordād in the Iranian calendar equates to June 5th). Soviet pride is the reason behind the use of the number ‘twenty-six’ in the rather cumbersome name *Imeni Dvadtsati Shesti Bakinskikh Komissarov* [имени Двадцати Шести Бакинских Комиссаров: In the Name of the Twenty-Six Baku Commissars], a small town in Azerbaijan now known as Kərəmli but which in the Soviet era was named in honour of a small band of Soviet commissars celebrated for their resistance to hostile forces in 1918, during the early course of the Russian civil war. Finally, we might note the town of Treinta y Tres in Uruguay, a name which literally means ‘thirty-three’, and is so named after a group of 33 celebrated revolutionaries who in 1825 triggered the revolt that would ultimately lead to their country’s independence.

On rare occasions we may find a name which is part associative and part commemorative. This is the case with Kowloon, the name of the mainland portion of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, which is composed of the Chinese characters 九龍, meaning ‘Nine Dragons’. The background to this name lies in the local perception of this area at the time; it was believed to comprise eight hills plus one emperor presiding over them. The eight hills clearly form an associative element of the name, but arguably the ninth of the dragons – the emperor who founded the settlement – forms a commemorative element.

Finally in this section, it is worth noting that associative names are more likely than commemorative names to feature in a foreign language environment, such that one finds for example *Ocho Rios* (Spanish for ‘Eight Rivers’) in Jamaica, or *Beshtau* (a Turkic form of ‘Five Mountains’) in Russia. Associative names have the ability to persist over time and survive changes in local language and political structure in a way that commemorative names, by their very nature, often cannot.

3. ARBITRARY TOPONYMS CREATED FROM NUMBERS

The preceding section of this paper has dealt with names including numbers for which there is some appropriate toponymic reasoning. In such instances, there exists either some inherent association between the feature being named and the name itself (associative naming), or there is some cultural basis for the use of such a name (commemorative naming). However, there are also geographical names around the world which include numbers allocated on a much more arbitrary basis, without regard for association or commemoration. Some of these names are relatively anodyne; they include categories involving substitution, representation, relative association and temporariness. But other arbitrary names have a less savoury flavour; these include categories of secrecy, exceptionalism and depersonalisation.

Naming involving substitution takes place where a set of numerical ‘names’ is established alongside an existing set of regular toponyms, and gradually comes to supersede it. Such a process took place in Chile after July 1974, when twelve of the thirteen regions of that country were each assigned a preceding Roman numeral (for example ‘Región de Antofagasta’ became ‘II Región de Antofagasta’). The sequence of numerals ran geographically from north to south, with numeral I in the very north of the country and numeral XII at its southern extremity. Very quickly, especially in the media and popular usage generally, these numerals became referred to in ordinal form

and actually displaced the traditional toponyms. In this way, ‘II Región de Antofagasta’ to all intents and purposes became simply ‘Segunda Región’ (= Second Region). This system of substitution worked well for several decades, but the rationale behind it began to break down after the turn of the present century when three new regions were carved out of the existing structure. Because of the location of these new regions (two towards the north of the country; one in the centre), their new numbers broke the established and straightforward north-south numerical sequence, and eventually in 2018 a law was passed dispensing with the Roman numerals altogether and reverting to the traditional names *tout court*. Although the removal of possible geographical misunderstanding was cited in that law as the reason for this change – and as we have seen this makes sense – it is worth pointing out that the numbering system dated from the time of Chile’s military dictatorship, and so the law also quietly removed a further vestige of that unfortunate era. However, the Roman numerals still live on in more enduring artefacts such as roadside kilometre markers.

Toponymic substitution of a very different kind can be seen in military engagements, on occasions when an armed force in unfamiliar surroundings needs to have a ‘name’ for some important topographical feature. The real name of the feature may be unknown to this force, which instead applies its own moniker, and for the sake of simplicity this may involve use of a number. To give just one of many examples, at the 1950 Battle of Ka-san during the Korean War, the United Nations forces gave the substitute name Hill 755 to the feature which in Korean is properly Ka-san, the choice of 755 as the number being a simple reference to the height of the feature in metres above sea level.

Naming involving representation is a similar process to that of naming involving substitution, the difference being that the representative name is used only contextually and does not replace the traditional name. Quite frequently, this representation involves the use of some standard and widely known coding system, and perhaps the most visible context is the vehicle registration plate in countries such as Turkey and (until recently) France. In Turkey each province has a very well established numeric two-digit code, which is shown on the registration plate; hence for example ‘67’ represents Zonguldak province. Similarly in France (though only until 2009) the traditional and very well-known numeric two-digit *département* coding system was used on vehicle registration plates as – in effect – a representative toponym. There are colloquial examples of representative naming, too; the fixture between the principal football clubs of Rotterdam (Feyenoord) and Amsterdam (Ajax) in the Netherlands, a match known as *De Klassieker*, is popularly referred to as ‘010 vs 020’, these numbers being the telephone codes for the cities of Rotterdam and Amsterdam respectively.

Toponymic representation may also be deployed in cases of disagreement over existing names. The sad story of the argument concerning the name of the sea that lies between the Korean peninsula and the Japanese archipelago reaches something of a nadir within the covers of a document titled *Limits of Oceans and Seas*, a special publication of the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) which is intended as a reference source for the boundaries of the world’s major maritime features, but which must necessarily carry the names of those features in order to fulfil that function. In this particular instance, because the littoral parties to this sea cannot agree on an acceptable portrayal of its nomenclature, the relevant page in the most recent draft form of this IHO publication shows a chart of this sea with no recognised name at all, but merely the vaguely Orwellian representation ‘Area 7.6’ printed where a name ought to be.

Naming by relative association takes us principally to the urban spaces of the United States, where several towns and cities display a grid system of roadways which have been given names in the form of an ordinal sequence. The most obvious (and indeed celebrated) example of this phenomenon is in New York City, where in Manhattan the avenues run in an ordinal sequence from east to west while the streets run, also in an ordinal sequence, from south to north. It is worth noting as an aside that this sequential system is not entirely infallible; it can break down if circumstances demand the creation of a new roadway on the unanticipated side of the road currently numbered first in the sequence. This has in a sense happened at King's Cross railway station in London, where the platforms run south-to-north and have traditionally been numbered sequentially from Platform 1 in the east to Platform 11 in the west. Redevelopment of the station required the construction of a new platform to the east of Platform 1, which has rather awkwardly been designated as Platform 0 (spoken as 'Zero').

Temporary naming usually occurs in situations where a feature thought to be unnamed is for some reason required to be named urgently. The Age of Mountaineering in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw this process on a quite frequent basis, and probably the best-known examples can be found in the Karakoram range of Asia, where five peaks newly discovered by Europeans were quickly 'named' as K1, K2, K3, K4 and K5. Their subsequent toponymic history is as follows:

- K1: the local name Masherbrum has become generally applied
- K2: the local name Chhogori has not been generally applied, but nor has the subsequent European name, Mount Godwin-Austen
- K3: the subsequent European name Broad Peak has become generally applied
- K4: the local name Gasherbrum has become applied, with an added numeric qualifier, as Gasherbrum II
- K5: the local name Gasherbrum has become applied, with an added numeric qualifier, as Gasherbrum I

Hence we see that for the highest peak among them (K2, second only to Mount Everest in height) the original temporary name still in fact lives on as the principal toponymic designator³. This same phenomenon – the temporary becoming permanent – can be seen elsewhere too. During the nineteenth-century 'Gold Rush' along the Cariboo Highway in Canada (now part of Highway 97 in British Columbia), wayside stops envisaged as having only a temporary nature were given names featuring numbers based on their distance in miles northwards of the highway's then southern terminus of Lillooet. Yet some of these names, such as 100 Mile House, live on to this day as the mature toponyms of significant settlements (HAMLIN 1999: 234).

Naming for secrecy was a significant factor in the Soviet Union, where some sixty so-called 'closed settlements'⁴ engaged in covert activities of a military or industrial nature – activities that the authorities wished to keep hidden from their public and from foreign interest – were known by means of a numeric post-code attached to the name of a nearby open town or city. Some of these closed settlements had a genuine

³ Note too that the names of the two Gasherbrum peaks involve the replacement of one set of numbers by another.

⁴ Officially termed 'populated places located in closed administrative-territorial formations' [населённые пункты, расположенные в закрытых административно-территориальных образованиях (ЗАТО): населённые пункты, расположенные в закрытых административно-территориальных образованиях].

name of their own, which these post-code references hid, while others were of new construction and as yet had not been endowed with any other name. Examples of this practice included some settlements of very substantial size: Seversk [Северск], which was known as Tomsk-7 [Томск-7], and Zheleznogorsk [Железногорск], known as Krasnoyarsk-26 [Красноярск-26], each contained a population in excess of 100,000 yet even these were kept hidden from view. For the most part, these closed settlements opened up after the fall of the Soviet Union, with their 'true' names revealed, but a few remained closed and indeed one or two have actually been added in recent years.

Naming for exceptionalism is again a process usually associated with unsavoury political regimes. Essentially it is an extension of the idea of naming for secrecy, but here with the feature having all locational elements removed in order to create some desired response among the population (often a climate of fear). During the rule of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia in the 1970s, a high-school complex in the capital, Phnom Penh, was taken over by the authorities and deployed as a so-called 'security centre' (in reality a site for interrogations and executions), renamed with the brutally simple 'name' S-21. Today the location is the site of the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum. It might be worth adding here that a similar attitude of fear can be engendered by the exact opposite process of leaving the original name intact; this was the means favoured by the Argentine military junta, also in the 1970s, which used the Navy Mechanical School (Escuela de Mecánica de la Armada) in Buenos Aires as its main interrogation centre. In this case the benign name endured, perhaps with a view to deception, even though the function had changed dramatically.

The final category of toponyms with numbers involves a process which we might call **naming involving depersonalisation**, by which authorities disperse their peoples into settlements 'named' by numbers, with little or no regard for their welfare. A prime example of this can be found in the fate of the Nubian people of Sudan. Readers wishing to learn of this in detail are encouraged to follow up the reference at the end of this paper to the article written by the late Dr Halīm Sabbār, a Nubian scholar personally affected by this sad process, but essentially the outline is as follows. The construction of successive dams across the River Nile during the course of the twentieth century up to the 1960s led to the displacement of the Nubian people from the lands affected, in Wadi Halfa, and their forcible transfer to a locality named 'New Halfa' in eastern Sudan. Here, in totally unfamiliar territory, they found that the new settlement arrangements made for them by the government bore no relation to the long-established village patterns of their homeland. Whereas the traditional settlement arrangement had involved one lengthy north-south continuum along the Nile, the Sudanese authorities now constructed small individual villages, several kilometres apart from one another and in an east-west orientation. In fact, such little regard was paid to the catastrophic social consequences of the resettlement that people of a single extended family group, who had hitherto lived in close proximity to one another, would routinely be dispersed among several new settlements. What is particularly relevant to this present paper, though, is that these new settlements, of which there were twenty-six, were not allocated appropriate names and were instead casually given numbers, running simply from 1 to 26. To compound this heartache, these numbers had obligatorily to be rendered in the

Arabic language only, with use of Nubian-language equivalents proscribed (SABBĀR 2012: 107-8)⁵.

The use of numbers by unconcerned authorities has not been limited to Sudan. Naming by numbers became a feature of British rule in Punjab, where the Punjabi word *chak*, meaning a parcel of land, came to take on the meaning of ‘village’ and was used in conjunction with both a numeral and a letter, such that villages were designated with ‘names’ such as Chak 112/7R. Surprisingly, perhaps, this colonial system was not dismantled at the end of British rule, and indeed it continues to this day.

4. THE PORTRAYAL OF TOPONYMS WITH NUMBERS

If we consider together all the examples provided in this paper, we can see that there are four basic methods of portraying the numeric element within a name. Firstly, there is the question of the form the number should take, with this following pair of possibilities:

- The number may be in cardinal form or in ordinal form

Secondly, there is the question of whether words or numerals should be used, with this following pair of possibilities:

- The number may be written as one or more words, or may be represented by a numeral

Clearly, any given toponym containing numbers must demonstrate one option from each of the above pairs. For example, The Three Pioneers is a name in cardinal form with the numeric element written out. There is no other way to write this name, and indeed it is most frequently the case that there is no choice as to the method of writing names incorporating numbers. It seems inconceivable that any of the following examples could be written with a numeral: Ground Zero, One Man Cay, Seven Sisters, Nine Elms, or the town named Ninety Six. Conversely, it seems equally inconceivable that the name of any of the Soviet closed settlements, or the mountain K2, could appear with their numeric elements written out in full. However, there are name types for which either form may be encountered. This is the case with grid-pattern roadway names (Forty-Second Street / 42nd Street), and can also be true for lengthy commemorative names: the Russian-language original of the awkward In the Name of the Twenty-Six Baku Commissars is often seen in print as In the Name of the 26 Baku Commissars [имени 26 Бакинских Комиссаров]. There may also be occasions on which the cardinal and ordinal forms of a numeric element are genuine alternatives; we saw this most particularly in Chile, where an official cardinal number in Roman numerals (such as II Región de Antofagasta) quickly mutated in everyday usage into an ordinal form (Segunda Región).

5. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

This paper has identified nine categories of toponyms with numbers. This taxonomy may well not be comprehensive, and of course there will very likely be overlaps among the categories; for example Hill 755 might be regarded as a temporary name rather than belonging in the category of substitution into which I have placed it.

⁵ It is sadly ironic that, during his time at the School of Oriental & African Studies in London, Dr Sabbār was assigned an email address of which the personal component (the component preceding the ‘@’ sign) consisted entirely of numerals.

But some things do seem to be certain. First and foremost, toponyms incorporating numbers are for the most part normal and unexceptional. Of these, associative names are largely innocuous and are understood across cultures. Commemorative names are understood mainly within a single culture, but are also innocuous provided one is a willing member of that culture. Substitution, representation, relative association and temporariness are normally perfectly acceptable processes too, though substitution may indicate some underlying problem. On the other hand, some toponyms created arbitrarily with numbers – such as those involving secrecy and exceptionalism – are not normal at all, and are not to be welcomed. Finally, toponyms involving depersonalisation are indicators of an authoritarian top→down approach to toponymy, a distancing from consequences which conveys a message that names (and maybe, by extension, people too) are of scant concern. It is just possible, sadly, that such names conform to the definition of an endonym, but they fall far short of the intended bottom→up spirit intended by that term.

By way of a general conclusion, we can surely agree with the assertion which provides the epigraph to this paper, that a name is better than a number, though at the same time noting that the choice in toponymy between name and number does not always have to be mutually exclusive.

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ANNEX 1: S.'s STORY

This Annex continues the tale introduced in the second paragraph of this paper. I took the liberty of inquiring of this gentleman (whom we may call 'S.')

I would mind my asking about the tattoo, and he proceeded to provide me with the outline of an extraordinary personal history, such as one might encounter in reading but which perhaps most of us never really expect to hear at first hand. Born and raised in the small southern Polish town of Przemyśl, the teenage S. had learned in September 1939 of the German invasion of Poland from the west. His response had been to cycle furiously eastwards – away, as he thought, from trouble – initially unaware that the Soviet Union had only a few days later also invaded his country, from the east, and that he was therefore cycling straight towards Stalin's clutches. Upon learning this, S. was faced with the realisation that one way or another his freedom would almost certainly be

imminently lost, for as a young Polish man of fighting age he would unquestionably be regarded as an enemy by both invaders equally. So the fearful dilemma facing him was essentially whether to 'choose' Nazi or Soviet incarceration. Perhaps because he was denominationally Catholic rather than Jewish, S. made the decision that for him the Nazis were likely to be the lesser of the two menaces, so he turned his bicycle around and pedalled back westwards. The consequence of this fateful decision turned out as anticipated to be capture by the Nazis and then, less predictably, transportation to Auschwitz. On liberation some years later, S. joined the free Polish Armed Forces (*Polskie Siły Zbrojne*) in Italy. At the end of the War, unwilling to return to a homeland on the cusp of communist rule, he chose to settle in the United Kingdom.
