

**Ronald Wixman. The Peoples of the U.S.S.R.: An
Ethnographic Handbook. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1988.
246 pp. \$15.95 (paper).**

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This book is designed to provide brief information for Western social scientists on ethnic groups in the Russian Empire and the U.S.S.R. As such it fills a needed vacuum. Most nonspecialists on the area do not read Russian, the language of the Soviet ethnic atlases. Now, at a glance, the interested student of Soviet ethnicity can look up hundreds of groups, from Aba (a clan of Shors living along the Tom River near Kuznetsk in Southwestern Siberia) to Zyuzdin (a group of Komi Permyaks in Zyuzdinskiy Rayon in Kirov Oblast).

Producing such a work is obviously a formidable task. Compilation of the material, crossreferencing it, and checking for linguistic consistency and accuracy requires painstaking care and scholarship. Because of this, I hesitate to nitpick about some omissions, but they do exist, and ought to be mentioned, if only for incorporation in a later volume.

Missing from the work are the Lipoveni (Old Church Slavonic Romanians in Moldavia), the Iravan/Irevan/Yerevan/Erevan (Armenians in Tbilisi), and the Savjabalaghi (Kadjar Turkic Moslems of Azerbaidzhan). If I spotted these omissions from the regions of the Black and Caspian Seas, what groups might the Mongol or China specialist find missing?

Also, the IAN or INIAN ending forms in the main entries are dropped because Wixman says they're cumbersome, but not using them can distort the name by which certain groups are known. An example is the Lazgian, called the Lezg by the author. It's also bothersome for Wixman to refer to a culture by its place name. Azerbaidzhans should be Azerbaidzhani.

My last criticism has to do with the fact that there are not bibliographic sources for each entry, but perhaps that would have been too ambitious for an already ambitious volume. Their lack does make the scholar interested in finding more about specific groups having to turn to the general sources Wixman cites rather than on a specific one for the group.

But these are relatively minor criticisms. Any handbook is by definition inclusive yet brief for each entry. Further, the inability of American scholars to read Russian, Arabic and other languages necessary for understanding the Soviet Union is a noticeable deficiency in our

training. Thus we need researchers such as Wixman to compile material on that part of the world for us. My work in the Balkans has made me realize how few of us read the languages of those countries, and the U.S.S.R. is a similar example.

This book will be useful for advanced undergraduates, graduate students and scholars interested in the ethnic groups in the U.S.S.R. For the larger groups cited, information about their history, language, subdivisions, religion and population is provided. Scholars wanting more than a summary of this information will have to go to other sources, but for basic data in English on the groups this volume is a first, and will serve an important function.