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Muslims of the Soviet Empire
A Guide
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June 1986

A.A.B.
S.E.W.
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Muslims of the Soviet Empire
A Guide
By Alexandre Bennigsen and S. Enders Wimbush

The Soviet Union, with an Islamic population of some 50 million, is one of the world’s largest Muslim states. This wide-ranging reference work by two leading specialists culminates years of research and provides basic information about the Muslims of the Soviet Union. Part I considers the historical roots of Islam in Russia, the political dynamics of Muslim life within the multinational Soviet state, the practice of Islam, and the domestic and regional issues likely to affect the future of the Soviet Muslim community. Part II is devoted to a detailed examination of the history, culture, demography and politics of Muslim ethnic groups in Central Asia, Transcaucasia, the North Caucasus, European Russia and Siberia. Up-to-date demographic information is presented in 86 tables. An extensive bibliography provides sources in many languages for the further study of each of the groups.

In this work, which provides the basic building blocks for an accurate understanding of Soviet Muslim society, Bennigsen and Wimbush emphasise that an appreciation of the Islamic factor should constitute the central pillar of research on the subject. Rapid population increases have probably been more important in bringin Soviet Muslim issues to the fore than the attachment of millions of individuals, deep inside the Communist camp, to the community of Islam, the umma. Yet today the demographic dynamism of Soviet Muslim people cannot be considered apart from questions of the Soviet Muslims’ self-identity and their adherence to a body of Islamic traditions and psychological

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