# Professor studies ethnology with helping hand from U.S.S.R.

**By Stan Nelson**
**Of the Emerald**

A fallacy of Soviet ideology is the belief ethnic nationalism will end with the demise of capitalism, said Ron Wixman, expert Soviet ethnologist and University geography professor.

Ethnology is the anthropologicai study of socio-economic and cultural origins influencing cultural growth and change. Wixman is an expert of ethnology in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

Patriotism among people of the same ethnic origin is a universal trait, one found in both the free and communist world, Wixman said.

The official Soviet belief always has been that ethnic nationalism is a product of inequities caused by the rise of capitalism, and without the influence of capitalism, there would be no ethnic nationalism, he said. Scholars have since rejected this belief, he said.

"Although Soviet scholars must write books and articles that support (the official Soviet belief), it is self-evident to anyone, scholar or not, this is absolute nonsense," Wixman said.

"Soviet scholars at the Academy of Sciences have come to realize that Marxist ideology, and especially the feeling of ethnicity, is wrong. It's not just inadequate, it's wrong," Wixman said.

As a result of a book Wixman wrote in 1980, the Soviet Union labeled Wixman *persona non grata*, unwelcomed to the country. However, the Soviet Academy of Sciences, wishing to have Wixman speak at a Soviet conference, was able to have his restriction waived to Soviet Central Asia.

Then in June 1985, Wixman and other American scholars went to speak and conduct joint research in Kiev at a conference on ethnic nationalism. Often, critics of Soviet ideology are invited to attend conferences of this type to present ideas their colleagues are unable to voice, Wixman said.

Wixman has been one of the most outspoken people in the Western world of the Soviet fallacy of ethnic nationalism, pointing out that racism, religious identities, and ethnic identity exist under any socio-economic system and cannot be removed from a society.

Likewise, Wixman has been an outspoken critic of similar ideological patterns found in capitalist nations. That view has won him Soviet respect for his even-handed treatment of the topic, he said.

The resolve of the Kiev conference was to conduct a joint study of Armenians both in the Soviet Union and the United States to determine whether there are any similar characteristics found in the groups, he said.

Photo by Shu-Shing Chen

***Geography professor and ethnologist Ron Wixman relates his experiences in and getting out of the Soviet Union.***

As the first part of the study, Wixman and Richard Hovannesian, professor of Armenian history at UCLA, will host a group of Soviet scholars in Southern California this winter to do field work on the Armenian people.

Then, if the winter is successful, Wixman said next year he will be allowed to go to Soviet Armenia to do field work.

"I am not willing to compromise my scholarship simply for the ability to travel in the Soviet Union. Any scholar that does that, and there are many, is totally reprehensible. Oddly enough, the Soviets respect that," Wixman said.

One must understand, though, the likelihood that much of what a scholar says in the Soviet Union will be censored, he said.

Wixman's first direct encounter with the Soviet Union occurred in a 1968 trip to Russia after receiving his baccalaureate degree from Hunter College.

"I was thoroughly harassed, and I wasn't even a scholar yet. I had my camera and all of my film lifted by the KGB. I was approached by bogus black market dealers," Wixman said.

Soviet agents went so far as to plant objects in his luggage while he slept before he planned to depart from the country, Wixman said.

"I was warned that I would be arrested (at the border) for having stolen goods. We opened up my luggage and in it was a 16th-century silver cross. We flung it out the window," he said.

When Wixman did attempt to leave the country, he was detained for eight hours before being allowed to leave, he said.

"When the woman on the border couldn't find what she

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