understand the enthusiasm of other Byelorussian writers (see, for example, Viera Paltaran, 'Hartajučy staronki Biel. S.E.', *Maladošč*, Minsk, 1, 1970, pp. 134-6). In it, despite the omissions and other defects, one finds a great

deal of sound and valuable information on a variety of subjects, and as such it will be welcomed by all who hold an interest in Byelorussian history and culture.

Č. Sipovič

Grinblat, M. Ja. *Belorusy. Očerki proischoždenija i etničeskoj istorii*. 'Nauka i tehnika', Minsk, 1968. 288 pages.

Within the compass of this small volume the author succeeds in giving a succinct account of the history of the subject and, more important, a great deal of information on the historical origins of the Byelorussian people and their material and spiritual culture. Drawing on the evidence of archaeology and, for the first time to any significant extent, onomastics, Grinblat outlines the territories of the Dregoviči, Kriviči and Radimiči. As he says himself in the conclusion to the book, it is possible to disagree with many of his propositions and conclusions. The reader may not want to disagree with the author's assessment of the tribal basis of the Byelorussian nation, but will conceivably be puzzled by his assertion that this nation had its origin in the *drevne-russkaja narodnost'*. Was the rôle of the tribes merely geographical, or did they differ culturally from other East Slav tribes? In other words, this book does not get to grips with the problem of how disparate tribes could be welded into a nation, something more than a unified polity, then break up into three separate nations — if in fact this is what happened.

It is difficult to accept Grinblat's dismissal of Christianity as an important influencing factor in Byelorussian culture. Similarly many will disagree with his curt rejection of the Uniate church as an invention of the Poles foisted on the subjugated Byelorussians, playing no part at all in the cultural life of the country. Nevertheless, in minimizing the number of Byelorussian Orthodox converts to Catholicism, Grinblat provides some interesting information on an area of 'byelorussified' Lithuanians, who must have been Catholics since the coming of Christianity to the area. It is quite likely, however, that their importance is being overestimated in this context.

The chapters on the material and spiritual culture of the Byelorussian people are full of detail on peasant costume and tradition. Valuable though this is, it does give the impression that Byelorussian culture was exclusively a peasant one. This is a book that stimulates disagreement, argument and further research, and as such is worthy of the attention of anyone interested in Byelorussia.

James Dingley

Rakov, A. A. *Naselenije BSSR*. Minsk, 1969. 220 pages. Tables and maps.

The timing of publication of this book is a little unlucky, in that it appears just as the U.S.S.R. has taken a new census, in January 1970. The census, if it could have been included by the author, undoubtedly would have added a very great deal of up-to-date information, especially if it contains all the additional and more detailed data, asked for by demographers. However, it will be a year or two before the latest figures are published in full. Meanwhile Rakov's book gives a reasonably full picture, on the basis of material available up to January 1968. Although the work is a strictly demographic study, it is

clearly aimed at a wide readership, which lacks training in demographic techniques. The various calculations made by demographers in order to study and analyze population (for example, the Net Reproduction Ratio) are carefully explained in simple terms, making the book easily understandable by all. There are many tables of figures, but rather few diagrams and only four, poorly produced, maps. Just as the age-sex pyramids, which are given, provide a swift, visual comprehension of population structure, so other diagrams would have made some of the statistics easier to grasp by the layman.