

*Vanguard Studies
of Soviet Russia*

THE JEWS
AND
OTHER MINOR NATIONALITIES
UNDER THE SOVIETS

AVRAHM YARMOLINSKY



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The Jews and Other
Minor Nationalities
Under the Soviets

By AVRAHM YARMOLINSKY



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VANGUARD STUDIES OF SOVIET RUSSIA

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*To the sincere men and women of Russia who, despite
prison, exile, and death, burned out their
lives trying to attain freedom, peace,
and brotherhood for the
common people.*

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

AVRAHM YARMOLINSKY

Born in Russia in 1890; received primary and secondary schooling there; studied at the University of Neuchatel, Switzerland; came to the United States in 1913; took his degree at the College of the City of New York and later his Ph.D. at Columbia University; since 1918 has been Chief of the Slavonic Division of New York Public Library; instructor in Russian, College of the City of New York; has translated several Russian books, among others, *The Memoirs of Count Witte*, of which he was also the editor; co-editor and translator of *Modern Russian Poetry*, an anthology; *Contemporary German Poetry*, an anthology; *Russian Poetry*, an anthology; contributor of articles on Russian life and letters to various periodicals, as also to *The American Caravan* for 1927; author of *Turgenev: The Man, His Art, and His Age*; spent nearly half a year in Russia during 1923-24.

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

THE Russian Revolution startled a war-diseased world and ushered in the most daring political and economic experiment of the twentieth century. Considering the vast territory affected, the radical changes inaugurated, and the influence which has been and still is being exerted on international relations, there is probably no greater event in modern history, whether for good or evil. Most Americans forget that a decade has already passed since Lenin and his Communistic followers assumed the power. The period of rapid revolutionary change has gone. Russia is painstakingly, step by step, building something different, something unique, something whose final destination is unpredictable.

America has been a land of discovery from its foundation. Not only in the realm of scientific invention, but in first attaining the coveted North Pole and in exploring other unknown areas of the world, Americans have given generously of life and treasure. Today we are uninformed about a great nation covering one-sixth of the land surface of the world. Russia is cut off by an Atlantic Ocean of prejudice, misunderstanding, and propaganda. We still maintain a rigid official quarantine about the Soviet Government. The result is ignorance frankly admitted by one "of the highest authorities in our Government," who declares this inevitable "in the absence of diplomatic relations." The late Judge Gary corroborated this verdict, "Like many other Americans, I am ignorant in regard to many of

the conditions which exist in Russia at the present time." *

Every scientist realizes that ignorance is one of the most dangerous forces in the world today. No matter how good or how bad the Soviet system, we should know all about it. Instead we have been ruled by propaganda and hearsay.

The fact is that for the past ten years the Bolshevik government has been operated on, dissected, and laid in its coffin amidst loud applause and rejoicing by distinguished orators in all parts of the world; yet today it is stronger and more stable than ever before in its history and its leaders have been longer in power than any other ruling cabinet in the world. It is high time that we appraise this government as scientifically and impartially as possible, without indulging in violent epithets or questionable and controversial dogmas. Surely the world is not so abysmally ignorant that after ten years of the rule of the Soviet we cannot discover a common core of truth about Russia.

Whether the Communists are thought to be "dangerous enemies of society" or the "saviors of humanity," the facts should be known before judgment is pronounced. No matter what our conviction, we have to admit that the Bolsheviks are hammering out a startling new mechanism in the field of political control. Their experiment deserves scientific study, not hostile armies; intelligent criticism, not damning epithets.

In the past, America has been flooded with propaganda of all shades. Dr. E. A. Ross dedicates his last volume on Russia "To my fellow-Americans who have become weary of being fed lies and propaganda about

* *Current History*, February, 1926.

Russia." In his chapter on the "Poison Gas Attack" he lists forty-nine stories broadcast throughout America which have been proved totally false. Other writers have pointed out similar facts. Walter Lippman, Editor-in-Chief of *The New York World*, in his illuminating study of all Russian news which appeared in *The New York Times* in the early period of the revolution, has proved the stupidity, inaccuracy, and falsehood of the "facts and fabrications" which have passed as news. Even those articles and books which have tried to deal honestly with the subject have usually been inadequate. They have either been too general or they have been specific but too brief to be of more than passing value. In all too many cases they are based on only a few weeks of observation in Russia by someone who did not know the native language.

The present series is designed to meet the need for reliable, accurate information on the major aspects of present-day Russia. We have tried to make it as scientifically accurate as is possible in the treatment of contemporary phenomena. It has been our aim in selecting each author to choose someone who, because of previous experience and training was peculiarly well qualified as an authority on the particular subject to which he was assigned. In every case we have chosen those who either have made a prolonged stay in Russia, actually writing their volumes while in the country, or those who have made a special trip to Russia to secure the facts about which they write. We have tried to make the series inclusive, covering the more important aspects of the many-sided developments in Russia. Each volume is devoted to one major subject alone. People want detailed, accurate facts in readable form. Here they can be found, ranging all the way from an analysis of the governmental machinery to the school

system. Within this series some repetition has been inevitable. The editor believes that this is distinctly desirable since each author expounds his subject in his own way, with an emphasis original to him and in the light of his own data. No effort has been made to eliminate contradictions, yet they are surprisingly few. Where the testimony of all is unanimous, the conclusions reached are overwhelmingly strong. Where differences exist, they should stimulate the reader to weigh the evidence even more carefully.

It is probably too much to hope that propaganda organizations will not endeavor to discredit any such genuine effort to arrive at the truth. Perhaps it is sufficient to say in refutation that no similar attempt to secure the facts about Russia from trained experts has yet been made in America or elsewhere, so far as the writer is aware. There is scant ground for intelligent criticism unless similar scientific studies have been made with conflicting results; even then time alone can proclaim the final truth. No sincere and unprejudiced scientist will deplore an effort to study and describe what has happened in the first experiment the world has ever seen in applied communism, even if mistakes have been made in the analysis.

These volumes on the whole not only contain the most valuable data so far available, but they will probably remain of permanent worth. In the future no real historian endeavoring to master the facts about the great political upheaval in Russia will care to ignore them. Is Russia the most tyrannical dictatorship of bloody despots that the world has ever seen? Is Russia the first step in the building of a new world order whose keynote will be industrial democracy? We do not pretend to give here the final judgment of history,

but we do claim to have made a sincere effort to portray the facts.

Thanks are due to the authors who have so painstakingly sought to present the truth as they found it, to the publishers for their assistance in making this a notable and usable series, and to all those whose labor, whether by hand or brain, has helped to give these volumes to the American public.

JEROME DAVIS,
Yale University.

PREFACE

THIS study is concerned with the nationality problem bequeathed by the Russian empire to the Soviet commonwealth, and the manner in which this unwelcome inheritance is being administered. The introductory chapter contrasts the attitude toward the subject peoples of the imperial government with the policy of political and cultural self-determination inaugurated by the Soviet regime. The first part deals in some detail with the altered status of one particular ethnic group—the Jews—and reckons the gains and losses resulting to it from the new order. Although the peculiar history with which this group is burdened sets it apart from the rest, the treatment accorded it exemplifies, to a large degree, the Soviet policy toward the formerly oppressed nationalities. This is enlarged upon and, it is hoped, clarified in the more general chapters with which the book concludes. Here the effort is to convey something of the new political, economic, and cultural life to which the emancipated peoples have awakened.

The sources drawn upon for specific facts are listed in a bibliography appended to the text. They include not only material available in print, but a considerable number of manuscript items. For these I have to thank the administration of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, which courteously furnished me with the unpublished reports of its representatives, as well as with the draft in manuscript of a portion of the voluminous history of the organization, which, when completed, will be a work of first importance. I am

grateful to Mr. Maurice Hindus for his kindness in turning over to me some relevant printed matter that he had collected on one of his frequent trips to Russia. The interest which Dr. Joseph A. Rosen, Director of the American Jewish Joint Agricultural Corporation, took in this book makes me very much the debtor of the man who has labored so splendidly to further the Jewish land movement in Soviet Russia. He was good enough to put at my disposal published and unpublished reports and studies, and, above all, to give me the advantage of his discerning comment on a large portion of the text.

A. Y.

August, 1928

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APPENDIX

TABLE A
THE PEOPLES OF THE SOVIET UNION

(The figures in this table are those of the census of December 17, 1926; they were published in the Moscow *Izvestia* of March 4, 1928).

PEOPLE	THOUSANDS	%	PEOPLE	THOUSANDS	%
Russians	77,760	52.9	Turcomans	766	0.5
Ukrainians	31,195	21.2	Bashkirs	714	0.4
White Russians.....	4,739	3.2	Votyaks	504	0.3
Kazaks	3,960	2.7	Mari	428	0.3
Uzbeks	3,904	2.6	Chechen group.....	393	0.3
Tatars	3,015	2	Moldavians	279	0.2
Jews	2,601	1.8	Ossets	272	0.2
Georgian group.....	1,821	1.2	Karelians	248	0.2
Azerbaijans	1,706	1.2	Mishari (Tatar)	243	0.2
Armenians	1,567	1.1	Buryats	237	0.2
Mordvinians	1,340	0.9	Komi	221	0.2
Germans	1,238	0.8	Circassian group.....	219	0.2
Chuvashes	1,117	0.7	Yakuts	215	0.2
Tadjiks	978	0.7	Greeks	214	0.2
Poles	782	0.5	Others	3,554	2.4
Kirghiz	769	0.5			
			Total	146,999	100.0

The ethnic composition of the population:

Slavs	78.1%
Turkic peoples	11.6%
Caucasians (Japhetic peoples)	3.2%
Finno-Ugrians	2.2%
Others	4.9%

TABLE B
SOVIET STATES

[Abbreviations: S.F.S.R.—Socialist Federative Soviet Republic; S.S.R.—Socialist Soviet Republic; A.S.S.R.—Autonomous Socialist Soviet Republic; A.R.—Autonomous Region (*Oblast*).]

STATE	WHEN FOUNDED	AREA (Thousand sq. kilom.)	POPULATION (Thousands)	CAPITAL CITY
1. <i>Russian</i> S.F.S.R.	July 10, 1918 (Constitution adopted)	19,748.3	100,858	Moscow
2. Bashkir A.S.S.R.	March 23, 1919	162.6	2,742.8	Ufa
3. Buryat-Mongol A.S.S.R.	June 4, 1923	379.4	491.3	Verkhneudinsk
4. Chuvash A.S.S.R.	April 21, 1925 (Proclaimed A.R. June 24, 1922)	18.3	894.5	Cheboksary
5. Crimean A.S.S.R.	October 18, 1921	25.3	714.1	Simferopol
6. Daghestan A.S.S.R.	January 20, 1921	54.2	788.1	Makhach-Kale
7. Volga Germans, A.S.S.R. of	July 19, 1923 (Proclaimed Labor Commune 1918)	26.7	571.8	Pokrovsk
8. Karelian A.S.S.R.	July 24, 1923 (Proclaimed Labor Commune August 4, 1920)	143.3	269.7	Petrozavodsk
9. Kazak A.S.S.R. (Kazakstan)	October 14, 1924 (Proclaimed Kirghiz A.S.S.R. August 20, 1920)	2,957.8	6,491.7	Kizil-Orda (to be transferred to Alma-Ata)

10.	Kara-Kalpak A.R.	October 14, 1924	124	304.6	Turtkul
11.	Kirghiz A.S.S.R.	February, 1926 (Proclaimed Kara-Kirghiz A.R. October 14, 1924; Kirghiz A.R. May 27, 1925)	195.2	993.1	Frunze
12.	Tatar A.S.S.R.	May 27, 1920	68.6	2,594	Kazan
13.	Yakut A.S.S.R.	April 20, 1922	4,023.3	445.7	Yakutsk
14.	Adighe (Circassian) A.R.	July 27, 1922	3.1	114.2	Krasnodar
15.	Ingush A.R.	June 7, 1924	3.2	75.1	Vladikavkaz
16.	Chechen A.R.	December 1, 1922	9.2	309.9	Grozny
17.	Kabardo-Balkar A.R.	September 1, 1921	12.2	204	Nalchik
18.	Kalmuck A.R.	November 4, 1920	74.5	141.6	Ellista
19.	Karachai A.R.	March 26, 1926	8.3	64.6	Batalpashinsk (pro.tem.)
20.	Komi A.R.	August 22, 1921	434.1	207.2	Ust-Sysolsk
21.	Mari A.R.	November 4, 1920	23.5	482.7	Krasnokokshaisk
22.	North Ossetian A.R.	June 7, 1924	6	152.4	Vladikavkaz
23.	Oirat A.R.	June 1, 1922	88	88.4	Ulala
24.	Votyak A.R.	November 9, 1920	30.3	756.3	Izhevsk
25.	Ukrainian S.S.R.	December 17, 1917 (Proclaimed again on December 11, 1918)	451.7	29,020.3	Kharkov
26.	Moldavian A.S.S.R.	October 14, 1924	81.3	572.2	Balta (to be transferred to Birzula)
27.	White Russian S.S.R.	January 1, 1919 (Proclaimed again on August 1, 1920)	126.8	4,983.9	Minsk

STATE	WHEN FOUNDED	AREA (Thousand sq. kilom.)	POPULATION (Thousands)	CAPITAL CITY
28. <i>Transcaucasian S.F.S.R.</i>	December 13, 1922 (Constitution adopted)	184.5	5,860.3	Tiflis
29. Armenian S.S.R.	November 2, 1920	30.9	879.9	Erivan
30. Azerbaijan S.S.R.	April 27, 1920	84.7	2,314	Baku
31. Nakhichevan A.S.S.R.	1923	5.3	104.9	Nakhichevan
32. Karabakh A.R.	June 7, 1923	4.2	125.3	Stepanakert
33. Georgian S.S.R.	February 25, 1921	68.9	2,666.4	Tiflis
34. Abkhasian S.S.R.	March 4, 1921	8.1	201.7	Sukhum-Kale
35. Adzharian A.S.S.R.	June 16, 1921	2.6	131.6	Batum
36. South Ossetian A.R.	April 20, 1922	3.7	87.4	Tzkhinvali
37. <i>Uzbek S.S.R. (Uzbekistan)</i>	December 5, 1924 (Entered U.S.S.R. February 17, 1925)	340.3	5,275	Samarkand
38. Tadjik S.S.R.	February 4, 1925	154.1	827.4	Dushambe
39. <i>Turcoman S.S.R. (Turkmenistan)</i>	December, 1924 (Entered U.S.S.R. February 6, 1925)	491.2	991.9	Ashhabad (formerly Poltoratzk)

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