

*Vanguard Studies  
of Soviet Russia*

# LIBERTY UNDER THE SOVIETS

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ROGER N. BALDWIN



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**LIBERTY UNDER THE SOVIETS**

VANGUARD STUDIES OF SOVIET RUSSIA

*Edited by* JEROME DAVIS

*Yale University.*

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# Liberty Under the Soviets

By ROGER N. BALDWIN

"While the State exists there can be no freedom.  
When there is freedom there will be no State."—*Lenin*



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*To the sincere revolutionists 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

ROGER N. BALDWIN has been identified with the fight for civil liberty in the United States from the early days of the World War. He came into it after ten years' experience in municipal reform, social work, and university teaching in St. Louis, where he had gone from his home in Boston following his graduation from Harvard in 1905.

As a pacifist and libertarian he opposed the war, organizing the Civil Liberties Bureau (later the American Civil Liberties Union) to help defend conscientious objectors to military service and persons prosecuted under the war laws. He served a year's prison term himself for refusing to obey the draft act.

On his release he worked as a manual laborer in the great steel and coal strikes of 1919 in order to get first-hand knowledge of working conditions. He then expanded the civil liberties work into the present Civil Liberties Union, which he has since directed.

Mr. Baldwin is active in many libertarian, radical, and pacifist movements. Among others, he is chairman of the International Committee for Political Prisoners, which organizes American aid and protests against political persecution in other countries. He has been identified with Russian-American enterprises—notably with the Kuzbas Colony in Siberia and with the Russian-American Reconstruction Farms.

He spent the year 1927 in Europe, studying political and economic conflict. Part of that time he was in Russia gathering material for this book.

## 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 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, 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 Russia." In his chapter on the "Poison Gas Attack"

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\* *Current History*, February, 1926.

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.

Roger Baldwin has written a unique contribution to this series. It is doubtful whether there is any other fighter for liberty in America who could have more faithfully ferreted out the truth. The author's interest and outlook are well known; they make his treatment the more significant. His interpretation of the facts will not entirely please either friend or foe of Communism—which is in some measure an indication of fairness.

The treatment is particularly thought-provoking for Americans. Does Russia have more economic liberty for the masses of workers and peasants than the United States? Is there more genuine democracy for workers under the Soviet dictatorship than in America? Is Russia pioneering in her treatment of nationalities and in her newly established legal equality for women? Is Russian education "unequaled for its drive or its experimental daring"? What lessons do the experiments of the Russian revolution offer us in the United States? How far is the rigid political control within Russia justified in a revolutionary epoch? If it is not justified in Russia, then how can we lightly pass over similar control in our own country during the World War, for instance.

If we read this volume thoughtfully, it may help us to catch fleeting glimpses of our own liberties and repressions. If we disapprove of the abridgement of civil liberty in Russia, do we oppose it here also? Do we champion freedom of speech for strikers? Do we oppose injunctions which deny freedom of assembly to union men? Are we willing to grant liberty of speech, of

press, and of assemblage to the I. W. W. and the Communists in our home towns?

If there are still those who do not know the facts about the violation of freedom in America they have only to ask the author of this book. Roger Baldwin knows at first hand of the denial of civil liberties. His courageous record for freedom through the instrumentality of the American Civil Liberties Union is well known. Will the readers of this volume who condemn the repressive methods of Communists in Russia protest against similar methods here? Americans who are incensed at the monopoly of one political party in Russia, rarely express similar feeling toward the disfranchisement of the American Negro in the South or the monopoly control of American politics by moneyed interests.

If this book can help us better to understand the meaning of liberty under the Soviets or if it can make us pause to analyze the meaning of liberty under our own political democracy, it will have rendered a distinct service.

The reader who wishes to pursue further the particular subjects treated in Part One of this book would do well to turn to the volumes of this series previously issued.

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.*

## CONTENTS

<i>Chapter</i>		<i>Page</i>
	EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION . . . . .	vii
I.	THE PROBLEM AND ITS BACKGROUND . . . . .	i

### PART I

#### LIBERTIES

II.	THE COMMUNIST IDEA OF DICTATORSHIP AND LIBERTY . . . . .	17
III.	ECONOMIC LIBERTY . . . . .	24
IV.	SOVIET DEMOCRACY . . . . .	33
	Elections and Political Power . . . . .	33
	Bureaucracy . . . . .	45
	Democracy in the Party . . . . .	49
	The Citizen and the Law . . . . .	61
V.	LIBERTY OF NATIONALITIES . . . . .	68
	Race Prejudice . . . . .	75
	The Case of Georgia . . . . .	78
VI.	RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND CONTROL . . . . .	91
VII.	WOMEN'S RIGHTS . . . . .	105
VIII.	FREEDOM IN EDUCATION . . . . .	119

### PART II

#### POLITICAL CONTROL

IX.	THE CONTROL OF THE PRESS AND OF PRINTING . . . . .	135
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<i>Chapter</i>	<i>Page</i>
X. CONTROL OF THE THEATRE, CINEMA, AND RADIO . . . . .	154
XI. CONTROL OF ORGANIZATIONS AND MEETINGS	160
XII. FREEDOM OF TRAVEL AND OF RESIDENCE .	171
XIII. THE CONTROL OF OPPOSITION: THE G.P.U.	176
XIV. PROSECUTIONS FOR POLITICAL OFFENSES .	197
XV. POLITICAL EXECUTIONS . . . . .	211
XVI. POLITICAL EXILES . . . . .	219
XVII. POLITICAL PRISONERS . . . . .	236
XVIII. CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS AND PACIFIST PROPAGANDA . . . . .	254
IN CONCLUSION . . . . .	270