AUTHOR'S PREFACE

This book neither pretends nor seeks to be a "definitive" investigation of the media of mass communication in the Soviet Union. The complexity of the Soviet communication system is such that a really exhaustive study of the techniques and institutions utilized for propaganda and agitation would have to be several times the length of the present work. At the same time, it should be recognized that this book is not an analysis of Soviet public opinion as such. It does not describe what the Soviet people think of the regime and the Communist Party, or about the United States, international relations, and the chances for peace. Although those questions are extremely important, the answers to them can be obtained only through direct contact with the Soviet people. Unfortunately, such contact is not now possible, nor is it likely to become more feasible in the immediate future, although research investigations among the numerous Soviet citizens who decided not to return home after the recent war may provide partial answers to many questions about the state of public opinion in the Soviet Union.

Accepting these limitations, I have sought to present an adequate, up-to-date description and analysis of the functioning of the media of mass communication in the Soviet Union. This study attempts to explain how Soviet mass communication works, and why it has the particular characteristics it possesses. But it is by no means intended primarily as a technical discussion of the Soviet press, radio, and film. On the contrary, I hope that this work will promote a more adequate evaluation of the implications of the Soviet system. Since exposure to a steady flow of propaganda and agitation is a major facet of the daily life of every Soviet citizen, no assessment of his life situation can be complete if it does not take account of that fact. Furthermore, Soviet philosophy and practice in the realm of public opinion are important indexes to the nature of the regime. This book is therefore addressed not merely to students

of the Soviet Union and to public-opinion specialists, but to all who wish to increase their understanding of contemporary world affairs.

The material presented here is intended neither as a polemic nor as a political tract, but rather seeks to take the form of a scientific investigation. I have earnestly striven to report the facts as objectively as possible. The field of Soviet studies is such, however, that failure explicitly to condemn is viewed by some as tantamount to approval, and failure explicitly to praise is taken by others to be equivalent to criticism. Such misunderstanding may be avoided, or at least minimized, if the reader will keep in mind the distinction between a political and moral evaluation and a scientific judgment. The failure to accept the principle that such judgments are distinct would make it impossible to obtain a realistic picture of the nature of Soviet society, and particularly of its strengths and weaknesses.

Some comment is also in order about the sources used. Just as a study of the media of communication in the United States would have to utilize American sources predominantly, so it has been necessary to rest this investigation primarily on Soviet sources. The use of such "official" Soviet sources poses special problems of interpretation, faced by all analysts of Soviet society, which cannot be discussed here. It must suffice to note that in working with these materials I have sought to draw on the accumulated experience of Western students of the Soviet Union, and on my own years of work with government and university research organizations engaged in collecting and interpreting such data. In regard to the adequacy of my efforts, the text must in the last analysis speak for itself.

There remains, nevertheless, a major difference between this study and any equivalent investigation about the United States, which lies in the fact that a person doing research on mass communication in the United States can check his information and conclusions within the country. Obviously, such field research is not possible in the case of the Soviet Union. As a result, the investigator of mass communication in the U.S.S.R. is at the mercy of his sources. Even if the published information is reliable, a great deal

of equal or greater importance may be left unsaid, and much of what happens left undescribed.

It would be misleading not to indicate that these facts constitute a serious limitation upon this study as upon all studies of the Soviet Union. Indeed, in the face of such restrictions it might be argued that scholarly research on the Soviet Union should not be attempted. But it is patently impossible to accept such a decision. If we are to make effective progress in comprehending and dealing with the force represented by Soviet Communism, we are under obligation to make the best of our available resources for studying that phenomenon. Clearly, one would not seriously attempt to state what the people of the U.S.S.R. are actually thinking on the basis of official Soviet assertions on the subject. On the other hand, we have real confidence in our scholarly studies on the Soviet economic and political systems, although they are based almost entirely on Soviet sources. It is my hope that this book will demonstrate that it is possible to achieve the same degree of knowledge about and insight into a social phenomenon like the system of mass communication.

My work naturally owes a great deal to all the men and women who as teachers and later as colleagues stimulated and helped sustain my interest in social science, but a special place is held by Lauriston R. Sharp, Philip Weintraub, and Julian L. Woodward, who introduced and first wedded me to the study of social relations. In addition, I am deeply indebted to Leonard S. Cottrell, Jr., who at a crucial point helped me to decide on a career in sociology and has always shown a friendly interest in that career. Specifically in connection with this book, mention must be given to Paul F. Lazarsfeld and Robert K. Merton, who urged me to undertake the first exploratory investigation of Soviet radiobroadcasting; to Robert S. Lynd, whose warm encouragement, wise counsel, and firm criticism guided the study through to completion; and to Clyde Kluckhohn, whose vigorous support was a major factor in bringing the book to final form for publication.

Bernard Barber, Raymond Bauer, Isaiah Berlin, Kingsley Davis,

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