



# The Strange Comrade Balabanoff: The Life of a Communist Rebel

*Maria Lafont*

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## **The Strange Comrade Balabanoff: The Life of a Communist Rebel** Maria Lafont

Born in 1878 to a wealthy Ukrainian family, Angelica Balabanoff broke ties with her parents and left for Europe to become one of the leading female socialists of the early 20th century. Just five feet tall, plump and plain, she was rumored to be a lover of Mussolini, Lenin, and Trotsky. Returning to Russia at the beginning of the October Revolution, she became one of the few women to occupy high-ranking positions within the all-male Bolshevik government, later fleeing Russia in disagreement with Lenin's politics. She was accused by European and American secret services of promoting communist propaganda, and by the Soviets of disloyalty. She lived in small dormitory-like rooms, moving on average every two years with her two suitcases of important documents.

She died in Rome at the age of 96, concluding her 65-year career by supporting Giuseppe Saragat in his quest to become president of Italy. During her nomadic life, state and police agencies in the countries she visited compiled documents on her. The author draws on this extensive, scattered archive in this first biography of Balabanoff.

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