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PRINTER'S CORRECTION

to

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Page 42 - Line 17, change "underlaying" to "underlying"

**NAVAL WAR COLLEGE
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COMMUNISM IN THEORY AND PRACTICE

A lecture delivered
at the Naval War College
29 September 1959 by
Professor A. N. Dragnich

You may be in for a difficult morning. I do not know who dreams up these lecture topics, but this one on the "Theory and Practice of Communism" is a pretty good description of a semester course which I give at Vanderbilt, and to try to cram it within an hour, or within fifty minutes, is going to be some task. I suppose if I were really wise I would select some phase of it and talk about that and forget about the rest, but I am foolish enough to attempt to adhere to the scope of the lecture as outlined.

Some of you heard Professor Ader talk about conflicting political and economic systems. Part of his discussion dealt with an examination of Marxism. I know that some of you in the audience (this is a somewhat different audience) did not hear those remarks, and so while I might prefer to go on from where he left off and talk about some things that I am particularly interested in, I must, for the first few minutes, talk about theory, at least for the benefit of those people who were not at that particular discussion.

All socialists, including Marxian socialists, accept the general idea that somehow the basic goods and services of a society ought to be collectively owned and collectively controlled for the benefit of all instead of a few. This is not a new idea; it is an idea that you can trace back to the Old Testament, and you can trace it up through history.

What then makes Marxian socialism new or different? In his lecture, Professor Ader made some rather significant distinctions between communism and socialism, and I in no way disagree with those distinctions. I think they are distinctions that are significant, but what makes Marxism somehow different from other forms of socialist thought is that, in a sense, it is the outgrowth of two converging factors or movements in man's history. These

are modern science and the industrial revolution. Now, I do not want to blame science for Marxism, but Marxism came along at a time when great strides had been made in science, a time when to call something scientific was really to call it accurate. Modern science gave Marx an opportunity to say, in effect, "Let's get rid of this fuzzy thinking — let's put society under the microscope and let's see what makes it tick." This, in combination with the growth of modern industrial power, which contributed to great changes in the social and political order, gave the Marxists an opportunity to attempt to develop from these factors a law of social development. The Marxists, therefore, like to refer to their doctrine as "scientific socialism."

Before I talk about Marxism in more detail, I should like to make some distinctions in the use of the two terms — socialism and communism. Let me just talk about the distinctions in the last hundred years or so. After 1848, i.e., the time of the publishing of the Communist Manifesto, communism came to mean revolutionary action toward the overthrow of the capitalist order and the establishment of a communist society. Socialism, on the other hand, meant the achievement of a similar society, but by constitutional means, by persuasion and the ballot box, rather than by force. After 1872, however, and down to 1917, the two terms were practically synonymous, or to be more accurate, the term communism was virtually dropped. Within twenty-five years of the publishing of the Communist Manifesto, therefore, its authors were calling themselves, not communists, but social democrats or socialists. With the coming of the Bolshevik revolution of 1917, however, the old distinctions were revived, and even accentuated.

The way the Russians use these terms is also of some interest. When referring to the doctrine, to the ideology that supposedly guides their system, they very often use the word *socialism*. They also use the term *Marxism*, but most frequently they talk of *Marxism-Leninism*, and sometimes of *communism*. They also tend to use the words *socialism* and *communism* to designate certain stages in their development. They tend to use the term *socialism* to

describe that particular stage in which they now happen to be — a transition stage, a stage in which they have socialized industry and other economic aspects of the country. This stage supposedly leads to the ultimate type of society which they are seeking, which is communism.

Now let me turn to a brief resume' of Marxian ideology, or Marxism as a theory. Note what I said earlier, that Marx thought that he and Engels had discovered the laws of social development. Note that I say *laws* of social development. They thought that they had discovered the laws of social development and then proceeded to expound them and to explain them.

The way I approach this discussion is to say that you can talk of Marxism as being essentially three things: It is, first of all, an interpretation of capitalism. It is more than that, of course, for an interpretation of capitalism requires an interpretation of what preceded it, etc. But if you look at Marxian writings, the bulk of them — I do not know whether you want to say 70% or 90% — but certainly the bulk of Marxian writings deals with an interpretation of capitalism and with an interpretation of social development generally. Secondly, Marxism is the stage — the positive stage — of transition, the stage in which all political power is seized and property is socialized. It is also the stage in which they lay low the exploiters. Thirdly, Marxism is the ultimate stage of social development — the ideal society in which everyone is supposed to contribute according to his ability, and in turn, will be rewarded according to his needs.

Now let me go back over those three aspects rather quickly. As Professor Ader indicated, the basic concept in dialectical materialism is that society moves through certain stages. One type of society will create within itself certain contradictions — will, in effect, create the seeds of its own destruction — and out of this will come a synthesis, or a new society which supposedly combines the best of the old and the new.

This dialectic process keeps moving. You might ask, what is the power there? What is the driving force in the dialectic pro-

cess? Well, it is matter; it is the mode of economic production. The way that man goes about satisfying his economic needs — his needs for food, shelter, clothing — determines the kind of relations he is going to have with his fellow men. Since everyone is out to satisfy his desires, his wants, his needs, conflict results, and ultimately society tends to split up into those who have more and those who have less. Out of this conflict of interests you get social classes.

Now, this conflict of interests, this setting up of social classes, determines how society is going to be organized, politically, socially and otherwise. In every instance the class which is the strongest, which is dominant or which is perhaps sometimes in league with another class, gets hold of the political machinery, and perhaps even the religious machinery of society, and proceeds to govern in its own interest. So you see, the state becomes the instrument of the dominant class in any particular society.

Now, when new productive forces evolve, the existing social institutions usually will not permit of their proper utilization, because the one class which is dominant is too selfish and not far-sighted. By following a selfish and short-sighted philosophy, it brings on a conflict. Class alignments tend to change, social struggles are intensified and ultimately revolution is the result. And, of course, following that you get a new type of society which itself will ultimately produce an inner opposition which will lead to its downfall.

When Marx and Engels applied this general theory, this so-called social law, to the development of capitalism, they discovered that with invention, with the industrial revolution, with the rise of the trading merchant class, the shackles of the old feudal order stood in the way. Thereupon the bourgeois class, which was coming into dominance, overthrew the feudal order and the shackles which held it in check. But like the feudalism and other societies prior to it, capitalist society brings forth its own inner opposition, the proletariat, the class of propertyless wage earners which it needs to operate the machinery of capitalist production. It does not, how-

ever, give that class all of the benefits that society could give it. In other words, capitalist society stands in the way of the proper utilization of all of the things that can produce abundance. Since the bourgeois class will not allow this abundance to be spread to the proletariat, the position of the proletariat gets worse — the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. One of the results of this state of affairs is that the poor people cannot buy the goods that are available. The consequences of this “overproduction” are unemployment, economic depressions, class struggle and, ultimately, revolution. But, according to the Marxists, the class struggle has been simplified under capitalism. Instead of many classes, as you had in Roman times or under feudalism, you have essentially two classes — the capitalist or bourgeois class, and the propertyless wage earners, the proletariat. When the latter discover what is happening to them, when they become enlightened, they will revolt.

The Russian Marxists, notably Lenin, altered this theory, in part so as to have it fit Russian society. You see, what this theory presupposes is that the revolution against capitalism will come at a time when capitalism is full-blown, is developed and is ready to fall off the tree, so to speak, as any overripe fruit might do. But Russia was a long way from being capitalistically developed. As a matter of fact, capitalism was just gaining a hold in Russia. According to Marxian theory, therefore, the proletarian revolution in Russia might not come for decades, or perhaps a century or more. I do not think that I am being unfair to Lenin when I say that he wanted to see the revolution come to Russia in his lifetime, and he did not mind modifying Marxian theory a bit, by contending, among other things, that the proletarian revolution did not have to wait until Russian society had gone through the evils of the capitalist stage. Social developments could be telescoped a little. Earlier Lenin had adhered pretty much to the traditional Marxian notion, but subsequently began changing, particularly when he realized that perhaps there was even the possibility of harnessing the peasantry to help the proletariat.

In other words, Lenin believed that they would march hand in hand with history, but they would just push history a little faster

than it normally would go. To do that pushing, Lenin devised the concept of the professional revolutionary. The proletariat would be led by a group of dedicated, hard-boiled revolutionaries who were disciplined and who would shed their blood, if need be, to bring about the new society. While Marx rarely talked of a political party, Lenin made it his chief business for nearly twenty years to build the kind of party that he thought would be needed to overthrow Russian-bourgeois society. Lenin added to Marxian theory the proposition that imperialism was the last stage of capitalism. He maintained that eventually various capitalist states would get into trouble with each other because they would not find sufficient markets at home. In their search for overseas markets, as well as for sources of raw materials, they would run into conflict with each other, and there would be war. Therefore, in Lenin's view, capitalistic imperialism was the cause of war. So much for the Marxian interpretation of the social laws that govern the development of society.

I am not going to say much about the two other aspects of Marxian theory. The one, the positive program, simply involves a seizure of power, the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, which is supposed to be temporary, and the task of building the new economic and social order. In other words, once you have this analysis — once the proletariat has conducted the revolution — there are two tasks: one, to seize power politically and to hold on to it; and second, to socialize capital and to lay low the exploiters.

The other, and final aspect of Marxian theory, has to do with what most of us would regard as Utopia, the so-called classless and stateless society. Some of you may be asking yourselves, in view of the Marxian laws of social development, why the dialectic process stops once the classless-stateless society is established. The Marxians have an answer for that. You see, this revolution — the proletarian revolution — does away with the thing which is responsible for the class structure — the private ownership of property. When property comes into the possession of society as a whole, you see, the thing which has divided people into classes

is no more. When everyone is in the same class, by definition, there is a classless society. Earlier, you will note, I said that according to Marxian theory the state is the instrument of the dominant class. Now, if there are no classes, then there is no need for a state. Well, of course, nothing in Soviet practice or any other communist practice has given us any reason to believe that this kind of thing will occur.

With this rather brief and cursory survey of Marxian doctrine, I should like next to turn briefly to a critique of Marxian theory, to suggest several ways in which, I think, Marxian theory went wrong or why it went wrong, and then I want to talk a little about communist practice, notably communist practice in the Soviet Union. Perhaps I ought to add that I am not entirely original here, that some of the things I shall say you may have read or heard before. In any case, I have listed six different ways in which the Marxian theorists have erred.

First of all, their assumption or contention that the materialist forces are the primary forces in society is not really sound. I think all of us would agree that materialistic forces are of some consequence, but society certainly is much more complex than that. We have many studies which demonstrate, to my satisfaction and to the satisfaction of many others, that the materialistic forces are not the primary ones. There are others.

Secondly, I think Marx erred in attributing the consequences of the industrial revolution to capitalism alone. What he saw of capitalism, what he saw of the industrial revolution, was really the first stages of capitalist development. Hence, he tended to attribute to capitalism alone the evils of that period. But our subsequent view of industrialization in other parts of the world, particularly state-controlled and state-engineered industrialization such as that in the Soviet Union, provides us with a more accurate picture. We have discovered that the industrial revolution, whether it is engineered by private enterprise or by the state, tends to create social classes (and this is true of the Soviet Union). The classes lower down in the scale are the classes which get less of what there

is to get. In other words, they are exploited. Therefore, it would seem that the exploitation of workers is not the result of capitalism or of socialism, but of the early stages of the industrial revolution.

Thirdly, it seems to me that Marx erred in not foreseeing that when the industrial revolution had run its course the lot of the worker would improve. Of course, this may be rather familiar to you. It seems worth noting, however, that the use of free speech and the availability of a free press permitted the discussion of many of the conditions which, I think all of us would agree, were atrocious in the early stages of industrialization. This discussion permitted not only the bringing of the facts to the people, but it also served to arouse a certain social conscience which resulted in a considerable modification of these conditions. Moreover, in addition to free speech and free press, the workers were able to organize into unions and thus push their program and to get many of their demands. And finally, the right of workers to participate in the choosing of members to legislative bodies enabled them to exercise an influence through the democratic process of law making.

I think all of you are fully aware that these things considerably modified the nature of the social order under capitalism. I should like to add parenthetically that perhaps, and I say only perhaps, the absence of free speech and free press in the Soviet Union, the absence of effective labor unions and the absence of a really meaningful democratic process — the very absence of these things in the Soviet Union may prevent the Soviet Union from going beyond this initial stage of industrial development, where you have one dominant class, call it the red bourgeoisie if you will, and the remainder of the people who are exploited.

Fourthly, I think that Marx, Engels, Lenin and others, erred considerably in underestimating the strength and flexibility of capitalism. Capitalism has turned out to be much more flexible, much more resilient and much stronger than Marx and Engels or any of the other Marxian writers attempted to point out. One reason for this has been the tremendous growth of a middle class. The rich did not get richer and the poor get poorer. As a matter of

actual fact, you had a kind of a levelling, with the income tax serving to limit the accumulation of wealth while at the same time a growing amount of sharing was taking place through legislation and through union activity. One other thing, I think, ought to be added: modern day capitalism, at least in this country, has demonstrated a tremendous ability to adjust to considerable public regulation.

Another point where Marx erred, I think, is in his underestimating the strength of nationalism. You are familiar with the Marxist slogan, "workers of the world unite." The Marxists insisted that loyalties to country would be superseded by loyalties to the working class, but this has turned out to be almost completely the reverse. Actually national loyalties have turned out to be much stronger than class loyalties, and there is no evidence of a reversal in this respect.

Finally, I think Marx and his cohorts also erred in their assumption that the workers would act rationally in certain given circumstances. As a matter of fact, most studies in the fields of sociology and psychology, particularly social psychology, tend to demonstrate that generally people are moved to action rather slowly, that people seldom act and when they do act they do not act particularly rationally. Many of the studies of political behavior in voting, for example, are quite clear on this point. They show that the reasons people give for voting as they do are something less than rational.

Having made these observations by way of a critique of Marxian theory, let me now turn to Soviet practice for a moment. You are going to hear Professor Brzezinski from Harvard tomorrow, who will be talking about the Soviet political system. I have talked with him about his lecture, so I shall attempt not to talk about the things that he plans to cover.

The basic critique of Marxian practice, it seems to me, is that this system, which was going to set men free and which was going to provide a greater measure of social justice, has failed. In

actual practice, the result has been three things: political dictatorship, economic dictatorship, and finally, the most far-flung tyranny known to man.

Now, let me go back to those three points. The political dictatorship was envisioned by the theory, but it was going to be something transitory, something temporary. Moreover, it was going to be a dictatorship of the majority proletariat against the minority capitalists. As it has turned out, of course, it is not a dictatorship by the proletariat, but a dictatorship by the few over the proletariat and over everyone else. In a communist political system, the party, or more precisely, the party leadership is everything.

In Mr. Khrushchev's TV speech he talked about how people are elected to the Supreme Soviet. He wanted to give an indication that this was a democratic system, that it paid some attention to the people. Well, I ask you, even if it were true that the people could elect freely to the Supreme Soviet, what kind of a legislature would you have, or how much could such a legislature do? As a matter of actual record, the Supreme Soviet meets for about five days once or twice in any one calendar year. Very often a session meets for two or three days, most of which time is consumed in a few speeches.

Permit me to digress here for a moment to tell you about one of my experiences. One of the things that I wanted to do when I was serving in our embassy in Yugoslavia in 1947-50 was to see what a communist legislature was like. Consequently, one evening at a cocktail party I asked the deputy chief of protocol if I could get a card to sit in the galleries of the parliament, and he said, "Why, yes, but I think the session wound up tonight." The next day I checked back and discovered that the session had begun only two days earlier and it was all over with. Thereafter I watched carefully for the announcement of the next session. This time I made my request promptly and got a card to attend that particular session of the Yugoslav parliament. It was almost a direct copy of the Supreme Soviet. I sat through every minute of that parliamentary session, which sounds ridiculous if you should be thinking

about Congress or the British Parliament. That Yugoslav Parliament met for about two and a half days. It met for an hour or two in the morning and then an hour or two in the afternoon. More than half the time was consumed by a couple of speeches. Nobody proposed anything from the floor that was not proposed by the government. No one objected to anything. No one voted against anything. No one spoke against any proposal or introduced any new ones. Yet in those short sessions they managed to pass seven or eight laws, one of which was the nationalization of the drugstores. I was interested in timing the passage of these measures, and do you know how long it took them to nationalize the drugstores? Five minutes! Some of the other bills took even less time.

The point I want to make is that in communist countries the party is everything. The governmental structure is there simply as an administrative apparatus to carry out party decisions.

I should also like to refer briefly to Soviet elections. Not only is there only one candidate for each office to be filled (and these are carefully selected by the party), but in addition a person does not need to mark his ballot to vote. While they do have booths for people to go into, the tendency of the post-World War II years has been to discourage people from going into the booths. Since all you have to do to vote for the list is to deposit your ballot in the box, the only thing you could do in the booth, anyway, would be to invalidate your ballot. The Soviets discouraged this, largely through demonstration; that is, certain of the party boys would appear and they would take the ballot and proclaim that they were openly "casting a ballot for Joseph Stalin and the whole list." Such open demonstrations tended to intimidate other people; they were convinced that it was wiser not to take the trouble of going into the booth.

There is another point I want to make in connection with the Soviet political dictatorship. It has to do with the Bill of Rights. I am sure that you have heard it said, and perhaps you have even said it that "the Soviet system is democratic in theory. Theirs is a democratic constitution. The trouble is that they don't adhere

to it in practice." Why, even one of our national magazines, which is noted for its hindsight, at one time said: "There is nothing wrong with the Soviet constitution. In theory they have a Bill of Rights much like ours." This is utter nonsense, and I want to nail that down if I don't do anything else this morning. Let me read you from the Soviet constitution, Article 125:

"In conformity with the interests of the working people, and in order to strengthen the socialist system, the citizens of the USSR are guaranteed by law: freedom of speech, freedom of press, freedom of assembly, including the holding of mass meetings, freedom of street processions and demonstrations . . ."

Does that give you any right, in theory, to advocate anything but socialism, or their system the way they interpret it? It most certainly does not. This is not democratic even in theory. It says you have freedom of speech, press, assembly and street demonstrations, provided these things are used in conformity with the interests of the working people, and in order to strengthen the socialist system. When the next person tells you that this constitution is democratic on its face, I hope you will refer him to Article 125. Also, you will find a similar sort of thing in Article 126, which lists the communist party as the only real force in the Soviet system. In short, you do not have political democracy under this system, nor do you have basic civil rights. Incidentally, the so-called Bill of Rights is not just a Bill of Rights. It is also a Bill of Duties, and there are some rather significant duties, too.

I should now like to refer briefly to what I have called economic dictatorship. Again this is a dictatorship by the few. It is true that the one Marxian idea which has been realized in the Soviet Union, and this is about the only one which has been realized, is that private enterprise has been taken over by society as a whole. In other words, they have nationalized capital; they have nationalized industry and other phases of the economy. But in the process they have not brought about any equality of reward. There are tremendous differences in income, and these differences are greater

than the differences we find here in the United States. The gap between the low-paid worker and those at the top is tremendous, much greater than the gap in the United States. Not only that, but the group at the top, which I referred to as the new bourgeoisie, the new master class, lives rather well. A trip to the Soviet Union gives one a pretty vivid impression that there are people in the Soviet Union who live relatively well, while the vast masses live in poverty. You do not see much in between. One cannot help but be struck by the contrast between a small number of people who live relatively well and the remainder whose standard is low.

Some of you have probably read, or maybe are now reading, the book by Milovan Djilas entitled, *The New Class*. Certainly there is ample evidence in every communist society to support what Djilas says about the status of the new privileged class. It is fairly obvious that the rewards to the few at the top are really all out of proportion to the rewards that others in communist society get.

Thirdly, I said that the result has been the most far-flung tyranny known to man. In this respect I am not going to confine my remarks to Russia. To some extent, I shall be drawing on my experiences in Yugoslavia, but we could be talking about any communist country. What I want to consider, in the few remaining minutes, is the question of the methods by which this tyranny is imposed and maintained.

One of the primary techniques, which I am sure is familiar to all of you, is what I have chosen to call force and fear. They simply liquidate people out of hand, at least the most dangerous ones. The less dangerous ones are perhaps imprisoned or sent to labor camps. And for those who are not sufficiently dangerous to be physically liquidated or sent to prison, there is the secret police, which keeps a fairly active surveillance of them, to say nothing of intimidation. Periodically, these people are invited to come in for questioning, released, invited again, etc. Under such circumstances, a person never knows when the invitation might carry with it a provision for a much more permanent stay.

In addition to the secret police, you also have what I have termed the secret police auxiliary, or the vast network of informers who are found in offices and in various places of work, in school-rooms — in virtually every segment of society.

The element of force and fear can pretty well cow the population so that it will not dare do anything, mainly because nearly everyone knows what happens to people in such circumstances. But the communists do not rely on force and fear alone. They also seek to mobilize public opinion. They make sure that they own and control the public opinion media. In other words, there are no privately-owned newspapers, no privately-owned radio stations, no privately-produced programs, no privately-owned movie houses, no privately-produced movies, no privately-owned theaters or plays. All of these are controlled by the government for the purposes of party propaganda.

For those people whom they cannot reach by these media, they go out and create new media. Let me cite one example concerning university professors who tended to be aloof at one period. When asked to write articles for communist newspapers or other party publications, some of the professors tried to beg off. A man might say: "Well, I don't know anything about politics, I'm not politically informed." The party's answer was to set up a newspaper for university professors. Now, how can you refuse to write for a paper that is specifically set up for you and your group? Look at the effort the state has made setting up a newspaper just for you. But if you then say you are awfully busy and have a lot of things to do, the party is generous even to the point of providing you with the theme, or perhaps even the finished article. How much easier could it be?

They did the same thing with authors. The Russians created the Literary Gazette, and the Yugoslavs followed the example by setting up the Literary News. Here, you see, they say to many authors (or would-be authors): "Well, many of you fellows complained about the previous regime before the war. You didn't have the right of free speech or press, but look how much better things

are for you now. Don't you owe it to society to say so? Here we have even set up a newspaper especially for you, giving you the printing presses, paper, ink and everything that goes with it, including," they might add, "the text of what you want to say."

In addition to this type of propaganda effort, the communists utilize face-to-face agitation, where they employ millions of people (perhaps two million people in the Soviet Union). All of these activities are under guidance from the agitation and propaganda section of the party's central committee.

In addition to force and fear and the monopolization and mobilization of public opinion, the communist regimes make use of a third technique, the so-called mass organizations. Whereas the technique of force and fear is used to destroy opposition and to instill fear, and whereas the mobilization of public opinion is carried out so as to make sure that the party's message is brought to the people in a variety of contexts, the mass organizations are utilized to harness the people to perform concrete and specific tasks which the party desires. Among the mass organizations are the local councils, the so-called trade unions, the youth organizations, the organizations of writers and artists, war veterans associations, sports groups, railway workers associations and a whole host of others.

In addition to the concrete work that these organizations are supposed to perform, the communists also hope that they can be used to create among the people a sense of popular participation. Some people probably do get carried away and think that they are really involved in doing something useful. Others probably hate themselves for doing things that they really would prefer not doing, particularly when they know that they are thereby strengthening a system which they do not like.

Moreover, the communists make sure that in the schools, along with science and math, the students are exposed to a certain amount of political indoctrination. Their one true science, the science of Marxism-Leninism, is not neglected in any school.

Finally, there is a constant attack on competing influences. There is an attack on religion, varying from the physical destruction of churches to the disparagement of religion generally. The consequences are fairly obvious. If you are a young man and you want to get ahead, you will seek to avoid an entry in your dossier to the effect that you are a church-goer. Then there are the attacks on the home and home influences. And you have heard about the attempt to exclude outside influences, whether it be the Voice of America, or books, newspapers, movies, or sheets of music.

I am aware that this hasty survey of the methods by which tyranny is imposed and maintained leaves a good deal to be desired. I wish there were more time so that I could give you a more detailed picture of communist tyranny, what it is and what it does, and particularly what it does to people.

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1942-44 Senior propaganda analyst & political analyst, U. S. Department of Justice.

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1945-47 Asst. Professor, International Relations, Western Reserve University, Cleveland, Ohio

1947-50 Cultural Attache and Public Affairs Officer, American Embassy, Belgrade, Yugoslavia

1950-52 Associate Professor, Political Science, Vanderbilt U. Nashville, Tennessee

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Author of *Tito's Promised Land*; chapter in Yugoslavia, edited by R. J. Kerner (University of California, 1949) and in *The Fate of East Central Europe*, edited by Stephen Kertesz (University of Notre Dame Press, 1956). Also contributor of articles to scholarly magazines.

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In "American Men of Science," Part II, Page 175.