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## THE OPEN FORUM

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### MAJOR SEVERSKY IS AWARDED MEDAL FOR MERIT

All those who labored to impress upon the War Department and upon the American people the prime importance of air power in the successful prosecution of World War II may take justifiable pride in the award of the Medal for Merit to Major Alexander P. de Seversky by President Truman on December 18, 1946. It was a long-deserved recognition, in the President's words, of his "exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding services to the United States."

THE AMERICAN MERCURY takes special pride in that part of the Presidential citation which refers to Major Seversky's major contributions "to the formulation of a sound public opinion through the medium of his writings from September, 1939 to September, 1946." THE AMERICAN MERCURY was the first national periodical to open its pages to Major Seversky. It gave continuous support to his ideas, and it offered him every editorial means at its command to bring these ideas to the attention of our war leaders and the public in general. Indeed, it was the articles in THE AMERICAN MERCURY that formed the basis of Major Seversky's celebrated book, *Victory through Air Power*.

The full text of President Truman's citation follows:

CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF  
THE MEDAL FOR MERIT  
TO  
ALEXANDER P. DE SEVERSKY

ALEXANDER P. DE SEVERSKY, for exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding services to the United States. Mr. de Seversky, as Special Consultant to the Secretary of War, served as adviser on air matters and contributed to the formulation of a sound public opinion through the medium of his writings from

September, 1939 to September, 1946. During this time he drew on his wealth of aeronautical knowledge, his shrewd analysis of trends and his remarkable ability as an observer to bring to the Secretary of War information of the greatest value in the conduct of the air war. He also devoted himself to presenting to the public an appeal for support of a vigorous air arm which ultimately made an inestimable contribution to the final victory. Mr. de Seversky's aerial knowledge, his singleness of purpose, and his aggressive presentation of the beliefs he entertained were of great assistance in the successful prosecution of the war.

HARRY TRUMAN

*The White House*  
December 18, 1946

### UNRRA'S RECORD IN YUGOSLAVIA

SIR: I have read "How UNRRA Bolstered Tito" [by Eric L. Pridonoff in THE AMERICAN MERCURY of January 1947] carefully and find it so full of inaccuracies as to give a distorted picture of UNRRA's rôle in Yugoslavia. UNRRA does not question the right of any writer to hold his own political views on any subject. However, UNRRA does protest against being used as a weapon for a political attack through publications of untruths about its operation.

Because the article is a reflection upon the integrity of an international organization of forty-eight nations, including the United States, I feel it my duty to call your attention to some of the untrue statements and other statements which, even though based on fact, tell only a small part of the truth with the result that the omission of pertinent information gives a wrong impression to the reader.

(1.) In Paragraph 1 of Section I, Mr. Pri-

donoff states that "Marshal Tito obtained it (the material to build up and equip an army of 750,000, plus more than 100,000 secret service police) through UNRRA." Again, in Paragraph 3 of Section IV, Mr. Pridonoff writes: "There can be no doubt that the whole of the Yugoslav army and air force was maintained on our supplies." The fact is that, in accordance with the resolutions of its Council, UNRRA's shipments are restricted to food, clothing, medicines and medical equipment and material to assist the agricultural and industrial rehabilitation of the receiving countries — plows, fertilizers, seeds, trucks, shelter materials, etc.

(2.) In the first sentence of Paragraph 1, Section II, Mr. Pridonoff says that the United States' contribution to Yugoslavia was 73 per cent and that the Soviet Union has contributed nothing more than administrative personnel. The inference is that the USSR has been avoiding an obligation. However, by the terms of the UNRRA Council Resolutions, those nations which were invaded during the war are not called upon to contribute to operating expenses. It is true that the Soviet Union makes no such operating contribution. Neither do Belgium, Denmark, France, the Netherlands, Norway nor any of the countries receiving UNRRA assistance. These countries do contribute to the administrative expenses. So does the Soviet Union whose allocation of \$3,046,000 has been paid in full.

(3.) In Section III, Mr. Pridonoff states: "Several of the decent and able UNRRA officials resigned in disgust, but as quickly as they stepped out Colonel Sergeichik replaced them with Russians. According to the most recent information I have, of the top thirteen representatives of UNRRA in Yugoslavia, 9 are Russians. They hold the key positions in the transportation and distribution of UNRRA supplies." I am frankly curious as to where Mr. Pridonoff got his information. Certainly his information is bad. Of the sixteen top officials at the UNRRA mission in Yugoslavia, only one, the Chief of the Mission, is a Russian. Of the other fifteen key officials, seven are citizens of the United States, five are citizens of the United Kingdom, two are citizens of Canada and one a citizen of Costa Rica.

(4.) Mr. Pridonoff states that Tito's government has refused to permit UNRRA inspectors to check on the textile factories, rebuilt or repaired by UNRRA-donated equipment, and he refers to a statement alleged to have been made by a "responsible UNRRA official" who is quoted as saying, "They would not let me visit the factory, but I found a way to get in. And,

as has been reported, I found the mills were producing only military cloth." The fact is that practically no repairs and no rebuilding of textile factories has been done in Yugoslavia by UNRRA which has not furnished reconstruction supplies. Also it is a fact that UNRRA observers have been given free access to inspect Yugoslavia's textile mills and have found no evidence of any material coming out of those mills being used for military purposes.

(5.) Again in Section III, Mr. Pridonoff reveals his lack of understanding of how UNRRA operates a supply program in any receiving country when he says, "No requests from Tito or his subordinates was ever to be questioned." UNRRA's supply program to every receiving country must receive the express approval of the UNRRA Central Committee composed of representatives of nine nations, including the United States. In addition, in UNRRA's European Regional Office, London, and at UNRRA Headquarters, Washington, every item of the Yugoslav supply program and every other country program is scrutinized and rescrutinized.

(6.) In Section IV, Mr. Pridonoff says that the 12,000 trucks which UNRRA gave to Yugoslavia have, in the main, been diverted from civilian use to that of moving supplies and soldiers of Tito's army about the country. "Many trucks," he says, "were attached to the army and functioned for it exclusively." That charge is as untrue as most of Mr. Pridonoff's statements. In October a Special Commission consisting of Colonel A. G. Katzin (South Africa), C. Hart Schaaf (USA), Commander M. J. Burnay (France), was appointed by my predecessor F. H. LaGuardia to go to Yugoslavia and make a survey of the UNRRA relief program. On the subject of trucks the Commission, after its investigation, made this report: "From time to time UNRRA regional directors have reported that vehicles thought to be of UNRRA origin had been seen in military use. Such reports have been brought to the notice of the government as they arose and explanations requested. Reported instances have involved less than 200 vehicles out of over 12,000 delivered to Yugoslavia for relief purposes. In this connection the commission has taken note of the fact that many thousands of vehicles of similar type to those supplied by UNRRA had previously been supplied to the Yugoslav Army by lend-lease from the United States and by transfer from the Allied Armies. It is not impossible, therefore, that Army vehicles could be mistaken for UNRRA vehicles which were of the same type."

(7.) In Section IV, Mr. Pridonoff makes the charge that "Unless the citizen was of the proper political color, he or she was refused any UNRRA medical supplies by the government clinics." That statement is refuted by facts obtained in a survey made by a Distribution Control Unit of UNRRA, which conducted an investigation supplemental to that of the Special Commission. The investigation took the Unit not only to the major cities but to smaller towns and villages in every part of Yugoslavia. Members of the Unit talked not only with State and local officials but with large numbers of the people, including the families of men who had fled the country or had been arrested; and then reported: "UNRRA supplies have been used as was intended for relief and rehabilitation of the whole of Yugoslavia without discrimination on racial, religious or political grounds and with ample provisions for the poor to receive their equitable share notwithstanding their lack of purchasing power."

(8.) In Section V, Mr. Pridonoff makes the statement that "Many Americans believe that UNRRA supplies were given free to the people of the devastated countries. Such was hardly the case. UNRRA permitted and endorsed the practice of selling these supplies to the people." It is a matter of common knowledge that a great portion of UNRRA supplies are sold to the people of the receiving countries who use the money obtained from the sales for further relief and rehabilitation. Articles making this policy perfectly clear have appeared from time to time in the American press. People who have the money to buy are expected to buy in order that relief may reach as far as possible. Whenever there have been protests concerning the high price of an UNRRA item in any country, the matter has been taken up immediately with the government.

I have gone to considerable length to point out some of the most glaring inaccuracies in Mr. Pridonoff's statement which, I feel, has cast reflection upon the operations of an organization made up of representatives of the governments of forty-eight nations. I hope that you will be able to print this reply to correct some of the wrong impressions it may have created.

LOWELL W. ROOKS

*Director General, UNRRA*

*Washington, D. C.*

SIR: Mr. Rooks' questioning of my veracity is somehow anti-climactic: the same charge has been made many times by the Communist press since my return from Europe.

In no sense whatever could my revelations of

Yugoslavia's abuse of UNRRA's relief goods be interpreted as "a political attack," as Mr. Rooks terms it. I defy anyone to quote any portion of my article which suggests that any one political or economic theory is preferable to any other. It reveals instead only what facts I myself saw, or was told by reliable persons in a position to know, while in Yugoslavia for over a year. What I saw and reported was that UNRRA goods were not being used as intended by those who were footing the major portion of the bill. Of course, the article may have political repercussions in America, the ultimate result of which might conceivably affect even Tito's career. But it was not in any sense a political attack.

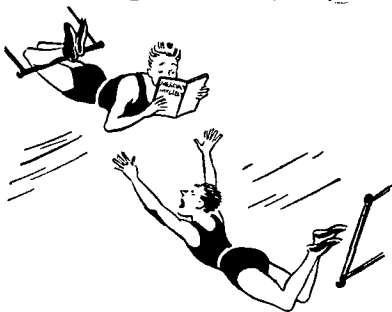
Nor can my piece, in any sense whatever, be considered a reflection upon the "integrity" of the group as a whole, although Russia did benefit indirectly, both politically and economically, from improper and inefficient functioning of a mission wherein her representative held the chief position.

As to Mr. Rooks' point-by-point attempts at refutation:

(1.) It is a fact, as Mr. Rooks avers, that UNRRA shipments were "restricted to food, clothing, medicine," etc., and "material to assist" (which included nearly every type of equipment) as provided by the resolutions of the Council; but this fact in no way refutes my statement. These shipments were not used by Tito as those who gave them intended, but were instead used to bolster the army and government, as I claimed in my original article. It is a matter of record that Tito refused entry to UNRRA until his conditions had been complied with.

(2.) It is a fact that Russia was, as alleged by Mr. Rooks, exempted from making any contribution. This only substantiates my claim that, *without giving anything*, Russia was able, in Yugoslavia at least, to control the distribution of all that was given by the other members of UNRRA. And this is the most important fact about the entire UNRRA program in Yugoslavia.

(3.) Concerning the number of Soviet nationals within the Yugoslav UNRRA Mission, Mr. Rooks chooses to quibble over the meaning of the word "top" as applied to the key position holders under Col. Sergeichik. Actually, the Colonel brought his Russian deputies to the post with him, and as Americans and others resigned because of the conditions which my article described, he filled these positions with Soviet nationals. Their official titles did not necessarily indicate the real influence and power which they had within the mission. Sergeichik and his Rus-



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sian staff worked as a smoothly functioning unit, with one purpose in mind.

(4.) As to the fabrication and distribution of cloth in Yugoslavia, consider Mr. Rooks' assertion that "*UNRRA observers* [the italics are mine] have been given free access to inspect Yugoslavia's textile mills and have found no evidence of any material coming out of those mills being used for military purposes." I believe that we should not allow much credit to favorable reports made by UNRRA's own employees. Especially, so when it is certain that Yugoslavia got textile fibers only through UNRRA; it is certain that her military was re-outfitted in new uniforms; and certain that the general citizenry got no new clothing whatever.

(5.) Even if we admit, as Mr. Rooks says, that "every item of the Yugoslav supply program . . . is scrutinized and rescrutinized" (in London and Washington), that admission would in no wise refute my general statement that "no request from Tito, or his subordinates, was ever to be questioned." There is no evidence brought out by Mr. Rooks that these requests were *not* always complied with. "Scrutinizing" does not connote "questioning" in the sense it is used here. And the important fact is that Mr. Rooks does not show, and there is no other evidence to show, that any requests of Tito were ever denied. Even though I suppose that there must have been some articles asked for by Tito which were not provided.

(6.) On the subject of Tito's diversion of UNRRA trucks to military use, Mr. Rooks again cites the findings of an UNRRA-conducted investigation, made this time by a "Special Commission" of UNRRA-appointed men. Self-investigation, I may remark, has always been considered a rather certain way of obtaining a desired report.

The findings of this survey, that the reported instances of diversion "have involved less than 200 vehicles," could not possibly be taken as a valid refutation of my own observation near Zagreb of a 400-truck convoy, all plainly marked UNRRA, and plainly in the use of Tito's army. How many more of the 12,000 American-built trucks given by UNRRA were actually used by Tito's army is not known. Certainly Mr. Rooks is in no position to know.

And if, as Mr. Rooks suggests, these "many thousands" of military trucks had already been given to Yugoslavia by America as lend-lease as army transfer, how does Mr. Rooks justify the giving of 12,000 additional vehicles to Tito? For giving them to Yugoslavia was *ipso facto* giving them to Tito.

(7.) Mr. Rooks takes me to task over what I

observed and reported as Tito's political dispensing of medical supplies, and here again we find the director-general citing the findings of yet another UNRRA-sponsored survey of UNRRA distribution. Would he have us believe that Tito is unaware of the power afforded by the complete control of drugs? Can we suppose that Tito would administer restoratives to opponents of his régime, when his government's announced policy has been the ferreting-out and liquidation of all dissidents?

(8.) As to UNRRA's endorsement of the practice of selling relief goods, which was the cause of the conditions described in Section V of my article, it is significant that, in this section, Mr. Rooks challenges only my opening statement that "Many Americans believe that UNRRA supplies were given free to the people. . . ." Exactly how many still have this belief would be rather difficult to determine. Yet doubtless a great many do continue to think that relief goods are by definition commodities for the needy, and are not materials for experiments in economic theory.

Mr. Rooks digresses from the subject to defend UNRRA's theory of how the sale of relief goods should work, although in my article I did not criticize this theory. I reported only what happened in practice.

ERIC D. FRIDONOFF

Los Angeles, Cal.

## CONFIRMATION

STR: In his recent book, *This Is My Story*, Louis Budenz, former high Communist official, confirms from inside knowledge charges about Soviet espionage made over seven years ago in *THE AMERICAN MERCURY* ["Stalin's American Passport Mill," July 1939] by the undersigned. The book identifies the mysterious man known as Robinson-Rubens and the disillusioned woman Communist, Juliet Stuart Poyntz, as interconnected Soviet spies; links an organizer of the assassination of Trotsky with an NKVD man using one of Robinson-Rubens' aliases (Richards); and states that Miss Poyntz was "liquidated."

The last charge was made some years ago before a Federal Grand Jury by Carlo Tresca who was later assassinated on Fifth Avenue. Neither the FBI nor the New York police have brought to book Tresca's killer, Poyntz's "liquidators," or any associates of Trotsky's murderer. And last year New York saw a new political murder — that of Republican Joseph Scottorriggio. It too remains unsolved.

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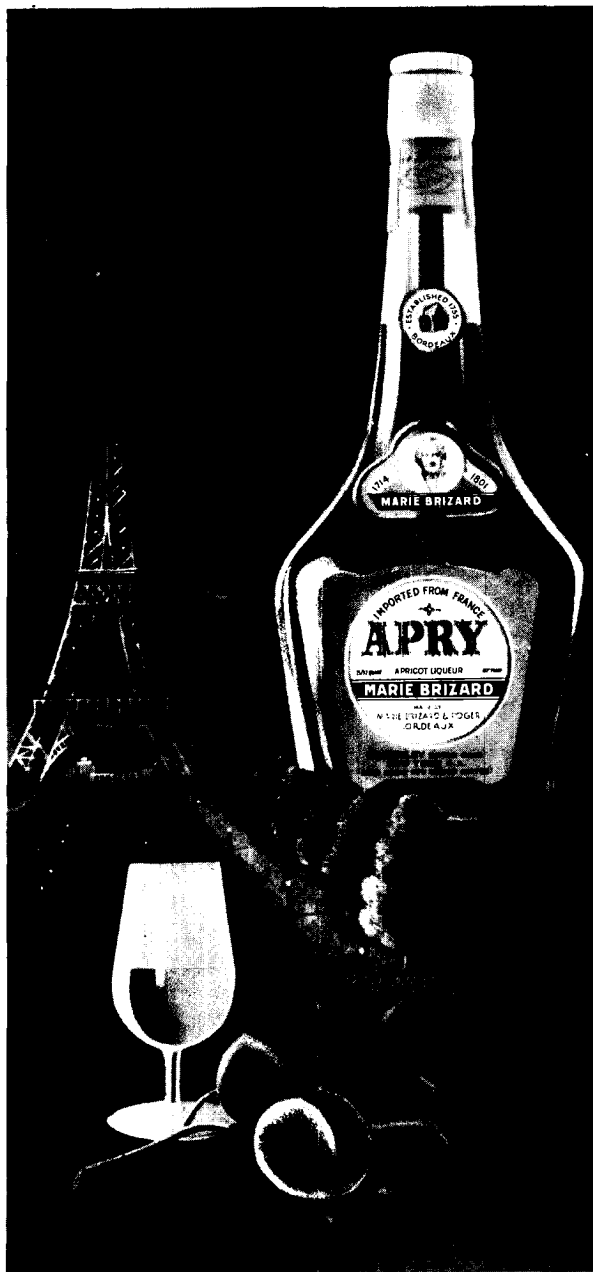
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