

Day After Day - February 1942

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*Summary: Shares her enthusiasm for Raisa Maritain's autobiography, *We Have Been Friends Together*. Defends their reaching out to all the poor, not just those deemed "deserving" of assistance. Reviews the positions taken on World War II by various Catholic Worker houses throughout the country, admitting that not all have their "in season, out of season" pacifism. (DDLW #380).*

Last month Antonio Perado came in to say goodbye and to get some back issues of the Catholic Worker to distribute to his fellow workers. Antonio is Portuguese and we have known him since the 1936 seamen's strike. He lived with us then, together with about fifty others, during that early outlaw strike when there was no CIO, no NMU, when a strike strategy committee had taken over and was trying to run things from a little loft headquarters on the water front. Now the union numbers 60,000 or so and its president, Joe Curran (for whom we pray each day together with a list of others like Bridges and Quill and Murray and Lewis, not to speak of A. F. of L. leaders), is one of the vice-presidents of the CIO and president of the state industrial council. Their headquarters are on Seventeenth Street, they own the building and all the seamen are delighted with their fine quarters and reading room and library and hiring hall.

"Remember the dirt from the Holy Land," Antonio said, when he came in. And we remembered him at once, one of the strikers of 1936.

When he shipped out again, he brought us back two bags of dirt from the Holy Land which we sprinkled on our garden at Maryfarm, the first Catholic Worker farming commune, down in Easton, Pa.

"I got that dirt on the top of Mt. Carmel," he told us, "and it was a long stiff climb to get up there. From the ship it looked so near.

"And now I am going to India," and there will be two long months on the water and plenty of time to read. So I want back numbers to pass out to the fellows and for myself too . . . Is there anything you want me to bring from India? I'll be home in five months."

"A spindle," we told him, "such as Ghandi uses today, and the Blessed Mother used in her time."

We ask our readers to pray for a safe journey for Antonio Perado.

Raissa Maritain.

"We Have Been Friends Together" is a book which I must keep talking about, it is so lovely, so stimulating. It is the story of Raissa Maritain's life, first in Russia and then in France, her early schooldays, her meeting with Jacques, who became her husband, and their friends, Charles Peguy and Leon Bloy. The story takes one up to their conversion and I will await with happy expectancy the continuation of this account.

I mentioned the book in the last issue of the paper, and I shall probably quote a great deal from it in the next issue because I want to quote what she has to say about Leon Bloy and what he had to say about the Jews.

Madame Maritain is a Russian Jew, and throughout the book, in her love for wisdom, she reminded me of my roommate at college, Rayna Prohme, of whom I wrote in my book, "From Union Square to Rome," and about whom Vincent Sheehan devoted a chapter in "Personal History." I have been so fascinated by this book that I carried it about for days and could not bear to loan it to anyone. (It costs \$2.50 and is published by Longmans Green, Fifth Avenue, New York.)

We are in the depths of the winter. This morning it was six above zero and as the boys in the c.o. camp say, twenty above is colder in New York than twenty below at Stoddard. The cold and the damp eat into your bones. Night and day the cold penetrates and two pairs of stockings, two dresses, two coats are in order. Maryhouse is a cold house and none of the doors or windows seem to fit. A gale of wind comes in around the windows, even when taped. It is necessary to go to bed with a scarf around the ears, but even so bones and muscles ache with the cold.

Yet Peter Toner, head of the Philadelphia group, says that buds are swelling around the Oxford farm, and Larry Heeney writes in from the Easton farm that now is the time when farmers begin to think of ploughing, though of course they cannot get at it yet. Two long cold months to go, and usually March is worst of all. Last year there was a blizzard every week end in March.

Odds and Ends

These days our paper is filled with peace and the land. Those are the two topics which absorb the attention. Let others contribute their ideas to the labor question—to us now in wartime and how much more so after the war, the question is—the unemployed, the unemployable, these who do not have work, and those who cannot work and need to be cared for. Our work grows heavier and heavier. There are about fifteen hundred people a day coming to eat with us. And many of the other houses report an increase. On the other hand, in spite of re-employment of many, funds are low because of a lack of sympathy for our peace attitudes, as well as a lack of sympathy for the people we care for. To many they are the undeserving poor. There is plenty of employment, they argue.

Why cannot they get work. But Christ did not talk about the deserving poor. He did not come to save those who deserved to be saved. He died for each one, even for the very worst.

This month we heard from the Seattle House, the San Francisco house and the Sacramento house. On the west coast the work goes on as usual. They are not going along with us in our “in season, out of season” pacifism. They seem to accept the “better way” for themselves; but in addition to not judging others in their choice (as is perfectly proper), they do not question the use of means in modern wars (which to us is closing their eyes to facts). With the acceptance of the “just war” they also accept the blockade, the idea of total war, the use of aerial bombardment of innocent women and children and these “means” used in the prosecution of a war, would also make it unjust in spite of the fact that the United States has been attacked.

The Milwaukee-Chicago groups also question our position. We did not hear from South Bend. In the Minneapolis and St. Louis letters the issue was not taken up. Both these houses are run by men who came to us from the line, and then there were no others to continue the work of running the House of Hospitality, they accepted the responsibility and for the last year or so have kept the houses going.

In Pittsburgh, St. Francis House is pacifist, not so St. Joseph. In Detroit the houses are pacifist. In Buffalo there is an agreement not to discuss the question. The Rochester group is strongly pacifist. Also the Philadelphia and the New York groups. In Vermont the Rutland friends do not go along with us on this point, but in Burlington, the Langlois cell continues with us on the peace issue. We have not heard from the Boston group, but they continue to lead the other in putting out the paper every month, with the Cardinal’s permission selling it in front of the churches. We have not heard from Akron and Toledo, but Cleveland also continues with us and the papers are sold in front of the churches.

As we pointed out two years ago when war was declared, the corporal works of mercy will continue to be performed in Houses of Hospitality throughout the country, and this movement of hospices will grow in spite of differences of opinion as to war and peace. The long range program of farming communes will continue with or without a paper to publicize them. There are many interested in the decentralist movement and there are many Catholic journals such as the Wanderer, Central Verein, Rural Life Bulletin, the Christian Farmer, not to speak of the Commonwealth and many others which will give due attention to the work of our cells, hospices and farming communes, and who will accept articles from our writers in this movement, so that the decentralist movement will continue to be publicized and popularized.

But that fundamental principle of personalism, the liberty of Christ, example rather than coercion, love rather than hate, the folly of the Cross, serving rather than being served, taking the least place, will continue to be stressed in these sheets. From the first issue of the Catholic Worker we have opposed the use

of force. We are not getting away from fundamental principles, as some of our correspondents seem to think; we are merely being consistent and sticking to them. If we do not work out our program on these lines we might as well turn to revolution. "In one hand the rosary, the other—the clenched fist," as Michael Quill was reported to have said.

We make this report of our groups so that on the one hand we may not be misrepresenting facts. We admit the grave differences of opinion. But we also point out that these expressions of opinion are not of the few, of a tiny group here at Mott street, where the Catholic Worker is published. A great number of our readers, as well as of our House and Farms are with us on this position. Many priests write in their approval.

We wish there were more articulate ones among them. But they are hard working men ministering to souls and not writers. Even soldiers, as could be seen from letters in the last issue, write their encouragement. This month a navy chaplain sent us twenty-five dollars and a soldier in Trinidad sent \$104.50. Our gas and electric bill for one month had come the day before. It was a final notice and the bill was \$103. This generous contribution wiped out that debt. God bless this fellow worker.