

# We Are Un-American: We Are Catholics

Dorothy Day

*The Catholic Worker*, April 1948, 2.

*Summary: Passionate condemnation of UMT (Universal Military Training) as un-Catholic and atheistic. Advocates Catholics become conscientious objectors. Condemns Americanism and rabid anti-Communism. (DDLW #466).*

Is it Soviet Russia who is the threat to the world? Is it indeed? Then may we quote from Scott Nearing's THE WAY OF THE TRANSGRESSOR?

“What nation today has a navy bigger than all other navies combined? The U. S. A. What nation today is steadily adding to the only known stockpile of atom bombs? The U. S. A. What nation today is tops in the development of buzz bombs, jet planes, bacterial poisons and death rays? The U. S. A. What nation today is spending the largest sums on military preparations? The U. S. A. What nation today is permitting representatives of the armed forces to take over the direction of domestic and foreign policy? The U. S. A. What nation today is arming its neighbors (in Latin America), intervening in the internal affairs of Europe and Asia, threatening the world peace and security and rapidly surrounding itself with a black curtain of anxiety, suspicion and hatred? The U. S. A.”

If we are to accept the materialistic and atheistic philosophy of the capitalist state which holds sway in the United States, then there can be but little objection to this state of affairs. If our values are derived from the stock exchange, if we are to join in the psychopathic mania that has made war an end in itself, which has made it the norm of the American economy, if we are to be united against an ideology rather than for an ideology—then we are on the right track.

Some of us at THE CATHOLIC WORKER have been going to the colleges and distributing a leaflet against UMT [Universal Military Training]. And most everyone to whom we gave the leaflet has expressed acceptance of UMT, has thought it a good thing. There are no antiwar organizations in the colleges these days, at least not in the Catholic colleges. There is a sense of the inevitable, that war is to come, that morality has nothing to do with it, that it is a question of licking Russia before she gets too strong, before she gets the atomic bomb. Around the local churches they are distributing leaflets and cards asking the Italians here to write to their relatives in Italy not to vote Communist. It would be interesting to know who is financing this campaign. It would be interesting to know why Communism has become such a threat in Italy. Is it perhaps that we have failed? And that, to cover that failure, we attribute the influence of Communists to trickery. Have Catholics in Italy been radicals, have they worked for freedom, those who control official policy? Has there been as much concern

for worker ownership of the means of production and distribution, for decentralization, for a peaceful liquidation of acquisitive classes, as there has been in establishing a *modus vivendi* with fascism, as there has been in cooperating with elements of the Right? Have not we Catholics, by and large, gone down the road of compromise so far that we can awaken no enthusiasm among the people? That the only thing we can whip up enthusiasm for, in conjunction with the Hearst press, is an anti-Communist crusade? A crusade that utilizes the anti-Christian and Mohammedan concept of a “holy war.” A defense of Jesus Christ by bombs, a blood soaked earth, quick death, hate. A hate that always exists in war despite the unreal and pedantic distinctions of theologians whose love of refinements is equaled only by their ignorance of psychology, of what happens to a man to get him prepared to murder. To get the poor in a state of mind where they will attribute every decent sentiment, every cry for justice, all love of man for his neighbor, to “Communists.” Because to go to war means to go against every decent sentiment and against all cries for justice and against all love of man for his neighbor. The policy of the United States is anti-Catholic because it is atheistic. God does not enter into it for in place of Him there is EXPEDIENCY. It has become expedient that we murder, it has become expedient that we ignore the precepts of Jesus Christ laid down in the Sermon on the Mount and applicable to ALL MEN, not just to a chosen few who are to be perfect. It has become expedient that we preach hatred of Communists to the people, that we fasten signs of hate on Church doors and sell comic strip hate books in the Church vestibule. Christianity has been reduced by the theologians to a rule of expediency, Christianity has been made to identify itself with Americanism, with the scum of the Right!

Why is THE CATHOLIC WORKER opposed to UMT and to war? Because we are Communists? No! For we were opposed to World War II when the Communists were for it. Because we are indifferent to the fate of the Church? No! For she is our Mother, the Bridegroom of Jesus Christ. But she is more than real estate, she is more than temporal power, her spirit is not the spirit of the world and she has no need to be defended by the arms of the world. No more than her Divine Master who refused such defense.

We are against war because it is contrary to the spirit of Jesus Christ, and the only important thing is that we abide in His spirit. It is more important than being American, more important than being respectable, more important than obedience to the State. It is the only thing that matters. We are against Universal Military Training because it is preparation for sin, For the sin that is war. That it is better that the United States be liquidated than that she survive by war.

What would we advocate? Wholesale disloyalty to Americanism. Wholesale refusal to fight. Wholesale withdrawal of labor (a general strike) from all industries that further the war effort. We would urge a mighty band of Catholic Conscientious Objectors who will refuse induction, who will follow Jesus of Nazareth, Prince of Peace, in the way of non-violence, in love for all mankind!