Her Name Was Mercy

By JANE SAMMON

Given her skill as a physician, Sr. Mercy Hirakobbe could have easily had a lucrative private medical practice in her own right. Marj Humphrey recounted shortly after Sr. Mercy’s death at the age of 83. But Marj pointed out that Mercy never received a “fee” for her work, maybe a chicken or some eggs, perhaps a few pieces of fruit, depending on the climate, or the life of the different poor people she served in her life as a Maryknoll missionary.

Her name was Mercy, and she “knew” her name. The Bible says that knowledge is the intimate relationship one has to someone or something. Certainly Sr. Mercy was well acquainted with the works of mercy. It was evident in the reach of her hand, and the fervor with which she prayed for the world.

In the chapel of the sisters’ apartment on Avenue C in Manhattan, she would sit in the armchair, affectionately known as “Mercy’s chair,” next to the window that overlooked the loud and frenetic avenue. On entering the living room, one would often stop short to gaze at her silhouette in the distance of the far window. Slouched somewhat forward, head bowed, elbows resting on either arm of the chair, fingers meeting at the center of her forehead, slightly oblivious to her surroundings. There was much for her to pray for in these difficult times: drugs hawked on the street below, police chases, fire sirens keening their ominous tune as they sped past the window, U.S. intervention in Central America, nuclear weapons, starvation in the fields.

Six years have passed since the accident at Three Mile Island. Six years since the first blast of hydrogen into the core? Did You do all that? Beautiful nuclear power plant, to mark the event, Felton Davis went to General Public Utilities, in Parsippany, N.J., which owns the plant, and there painted “SHUT DOWN TMI” across walls and the entrance sign. After pleading no contest, he was sentenced to one year in jail. He is currently incarcerated in the Morris County Jail, 23 Court Street, Morristown, N.J. 07960.

Once again I come to this hidden place with hidden questions for a hidden God. Or maybe not hidden. Perhaps not really hidden, after all. We are not alone. God is always with me, so we can ask questions of each other as well as of You?

“A Prayer for October 3rd

October 3rd marked the first anniversary of the restarting of Unit 1 of the Three Mile Island nuclear power plant. To mark the event, Felton Davis went to General Public Utilities, in Parsippany, N.J., which owns the plant, and there painted “SHUT DOWN TMI” across walls and the entrance sign. After pleading no contest, he was sentenced to one year in jail. He is currently incarcerated in the Morris County Jail, 23 Court Street, Morristown, N.J. 07960.

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The disciples of Jesus were jailed, and they rejoiced to think that they might be with him. The recognition that modern, mass society’s materialist conception of what it means to be a human being is fundamentally wrong. The Marxists and the capitalists both, in their own ways, deform the person by denying the spiritual. Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin were not the only thinkers in the 1930’s to take this position. During the same period, in France, there was Emmanuel Mounier.

Dorothy and Peter had already started the Catholic Worker newspaper when they first heard of Mounier. They immediately sensed their kinship with this philosopher and writer who claimed that his was “une philosophie combattante,” that is, a philosophy that waged its combat not for a place in the universities, but in the hearts of everyday working people. Dorothy and Peter must have been strengthened in their own beliefs when they first heard of Mounier. The new journal of thought that he and his friends started, were loudly and clearly Protestant to the separation of the material from the spiritual as Dorothy and Peter were doing, during those early, crucial years, in “The Catholic Worker.”

Emmanuel Mounier had given up an academic career as a professional teacher and turned to his own special kind of journalism to analyze in depth and confront the social injustices, the unemployment and the militarism that were tearing his country apart. But Mounier did not confine himself within rigid political plans of action. His approach was theoretical and created a deeper, more dynamic and creative conception of the person. Mounier’s aim was to restore reverence for the human person in all the political and social debates that were then raging. Yet, if his work was mainly theoretical, it also had crucial practical applications, and Peter Maurin was a friend of Mounier’s philosophy of Personalism the foundation for a new society.

He was born in 1905 in Grenoble, France, near the Alps. The family was of the middle class; his father was a pharmacist. Peter Maurin was from the soil, however, were strong, for all his grandparents had been farmers. As a child, Mounier was meditative, studious and somewhat solitary. His parents directed him toward medical studies to draw him away from the blue-collar and political side of life. Following their wishes, he enrolled in 1921 as a science major at the University of Grenoble. For three years he struggled with physics, chemistry and physics, and by then, had immediately sensed their kinship with this philosophy that was sweeping the country.

Mounier’s parents were devout Roman Catholics, and his own religious life was intense, by all accounts. During his time at the university, he was actively involved in the student retreat movement, and the St. Vincent de Paul Society. But Mounier was also in the left mainstream French Catholicism was imprisoned in a middle class ghetto, and he struggled to integrate his faith with the needs of the society and the times he lived in. One of his professors reported that, “It was Mounier who invited me to a student retreat group in St. Laurence parish, one of the poorest working-class parishes.”

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EMMANUEL MOUNIER, PERSONALIST

By BILL GRIFFIN

The philosophy of the Catholic Worker movement is characterized by the recognition that modern, mass society’s materialist conception of what it means to be a human being is fundamentally wrong. The Marxists and the capitalists both, in their own ways, deform the person by denying the spiritual. Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin were not the only thinkers in the 1930’s to take this position. During the same period, in France, there was Emmanuel Mounier.

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FRIDAY NIGHT MEETINGS

In keeping with Peter Maurin's recognition of the need for ongoing clarification of thought, we invite you to join us for our weekly Friday night meetings. The meetings are held at St. Joseph House – 36 East First St., (212) 254-1640. As much as we can see ahead, those who will hold at First St. will be marked with an asterisk (*). Both houses are between First and Second Avenues (2nd Ave. stop on the F train). Meetings begin at 7:30 P.M.

November 7 – Tom Lewis: The Artist as Resister and Creator of Hope.

November 14 – Bill Griffin: Emmanuel Mounier, Personalist.

November 21 – Schola: Songs of Peace and Justice.

November 28 – No meeting. Happy Thanksgiving!

December 5 – Roundtable Discussion on Anarchism.


December 19 – Carmen Matthews: A Christmas Reading.

December 26 – No meeting. Merry Christmas!

MEETINGS BEGIN AT 7:30 P.M.
A Matter of Compassion on Trial

By DAVID BESEDA

Last summer, I attended a court hearing set to determine the fate of the poor and handicapped homeless women who were to be thrown out of a city-run shelter. While waiting in the crowded room, I looked up at the big, brass lettering on the wall above the judge’s bench, and, giggling quietly, read, “In God We Trust.” It seemed that the judge accidentally betrayed itself and removed any doubt about whether its decisions are really based on anything else. After all, God has put His money on losers any day.

Legal decisions are truths in facts, law, logic, politics, economics. The judge, who operates on the basis of these tangibles, is put in an awkward position when the court is asked to deal with a matter which should be decided mainly on the basis of compassion and empathy. On this particular day, lawyers representing some of the women were hoping to convince the judge that he should not close the city from closing down one of its shelters for its homeless, and he believed the government only had a legal right to be provided only a bed to the women in a shelter, but we are not bound by law to a certain quality of shelter. And, although the court managers representing the city government were surprisingly frank in their arguments, the opposition, the lawyers representing the city government, were surprisingly frank in their arguments. “Your honor,” they said, “we are only bound by law to provide a bed to these women in a shelter, but we are not bound to care for them.” And, although the judge was moved by this building for another purpose, and plans were made to move everyone about twenty miles away to a large, run-down National Guard armory, where they would have to sleep in one big room with no privacy, compete for too few toilets, and be left with no recreation or lounge areas.

The lawyers representing the homeless women argued in court that a forced move to an old, dirty warehouse was a deprivation of their rights. Plus, the lawyers stated, such a move would leave many women traumatized; some might be driven back out onto the streets; others would lose their progress they had made through local job training and supportive programs. In opposition, the lawyers representing the city government were surprisingly frank in their arguments. “Your honor,” they said, “we are only bound by law to provide a bed to these women in a shelter, but we are not bound to care for them.”

After hearing the two sides argue, the judge was forced to respond to the widow in such a state they tried to challenge the Church at a time when the judgment was not accidental. All was in the facts of history that peace could not be achieved by war. She saw the horrible effects war had on the human race. God’s creation destroyed, the shattered lives of men and women, the suffering of innocent children. She grieved, especially, at the suffering of the homeless poor at the hands of the government’s welfare system. Dorothy was not satisfied to stand by and watch, she had no place to turn around the problem of homelessness.

To Build Up the Kingdom

By JEANNETTE NOEL

Dorothy Day, in her passionate love of the Gospel, left us a precious legacy, and not only to the Catholic Worker, but to all peoples. What stood out most in her life was the fact that she showed the Gospel to be possible in everyday life. She didn’t preach it, she lived it. She didn’t stand apart and plead the cause of the poor and oppressed; she did simply live among them; she served them, even went to jail for them.

This does not mean that Dorothy was never discouraged. Not at all. But she did not give up easily. When the burden became heavy, Dorothy would weep and wonder if the whole thing was worth while. She would feel that things had become “unhinged” and we all have known such times. With the bedlam of the houses of hospitality overwhelmed her, she wept—wet over her own hardness of heart. Once, when Father Kathleen Jordan found her in such a state they tried to offer sympathy. “Don’t pity me,” she said, quietly but firmly, with a stunning sense of her sufficient capacities for transcendence that took their breath away. As Dan Berrigan stated so well, “Dorothy was not satisfied to stand the wounds of the poor. She wondered why, in a country rich in resources, a child of God should lie by the wayside unattended, passed by, scorned by most.” She saw this happening not only in New York City, but all over the world. Dorothy remembered the parable of Jesus revealing the true love of neighbor, as she knelt and lifted the head of an afflicted one. This simple act was extended, transformed, and became her life, her destiny, as she opened her eyes and heart to the misery of the poor and oppressed. She prayed, cried out and came to see that their tragedy was not accidental. All was in fact, being cut down by the main business of the modern world, the business of war.

Dorothy, a prophet of our time, dared to challenge the Church at a time when pacifism was not spoken of. She encouraged draft resistance and spoke out strongly on the subject. She knew from history that peace could not be achieved by war. She saw the horrible effects war had on the human race. God’s creation destroyed, the shattered lives of men and women, the suffering of innocent children. She grieved, especially, at the suffering of the homeless poor at the hands of the government’s welfare system. Dorothy did not stop there, at feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, housing the homeless, caring for the sick, visiting those in prison, burying the dead. Dorothy symbolized the essential responsibility of all persons to filter the cry, but to come up with more faith and courage, more prayer and personal action.

Homeless people who don’t stay on the streets spend their time in city shelters—pushed around by security guards, deprived of privacy or space, left in their loneliness to sleep in dirty, often rodent-infested, often the same.time for the more than 5,000 homeless families in this city. Last week, for instance, I met Barbara C., whose son is autistic, cannot speak or feed himself. Caring for him in her own home was hard enough, but she had no apartment because of a building fire, yet she had no place to turn except the welfare department. There was no room in any of the churches, and her food stamps were full.

Perhapes, though, it’s evading the point to read the parable of the unjust judge simply as a moral lesson, but as a personal judgment, simply as a personal judgment. The woman in the island who prays for the gift of a house to take in all those who seek help at the door. In New York City alone, it is estimated that there are more than 20,000 single individuals without a place to live, with, at most, room for only about 500 people in all of the city-run shelters put together. In the “new society within the shell of the old” there is, unfortunately, room for a mere few. The other day, my three-year-old son asked me why Noah took only two animals of each kind into the ark, and what did all of the other animals do, to deserve to die? I feel somewhat the same about all the thousands of people who cannot find refuge in the few decent places available. The Gospel of the Eucharist was a celebration of life. Dorothy’s celebration was a celebration of love and the celebration of the Church, the celebration of the love of neighbor, as she knelt and lifted the head of an afflicted one. This simple act was extended, transformed, and became her life, her destiny, as she opened her eyes and heart to the misery of the poor and oppressed. She prayed, cried out and came to see that their tragedy was not accidental. All was in fact, being cut down by the main business of the modern world, the business of war.

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Dorothy’s life is put into an awkward position when the government runs a dangerous, dirty, dehumanizing shelter system, and still the court will decide that the poor and homeless people have a legal right to be provided only emergency shelter by the city, but high standards of comfort and safety exist. For as long as the municipal shelter system has existed, intolerable treatment has been its hallmark. Back in 1983, Peter J. Bowyer wrote: ‘‘...so people no longer consider hospitality to the poor a personal duty. And it decides that people who are homeless have a legal right to be provided only emergency shelter by the city, but high standards of comfort and safety exist. The charge is that the ‘Muni’ goes to the down and out and is no hospitality, because what can be found in some readers’ pocketbooks does not come from their hearts.”
No Holy War

By MSRGR. BRUCE KENT

(Mgr. Kent is the former general secret ary of Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament in England, and his article origi nally appeared in The Catholic Worker, Great Peter Street, London SW1P 2HB, Eng. land. Eds. note.)

Military chaplains may not be over joyed to find this article coming from this pen. I ask them to believe that in what follows there is no suggestion that they do not fully fulfill their pastoral role in an area where it is certainly needed. To suggest anything else would be ungener ous and untrue, having given them the de ntal devotion and gratitude and the pub lical debts of gratitude to pay to of the chaplains I met during my military service. Where today, I wonder, is the quiet and simple priest who, long ago at Bovington, as I wrestled with the 19 sat, and its extraordinary values, fed me with Graham Greene's The Power and the Glo ry and plenty of useful advice as well?

My concern today does not raise the pastoral role of military chaplains, but it would certainly wish to suggest that there are other parts of the Chris tian family to which we should pay the same care as well. There are many chaplains inside military bases, but not very many charged with the pastoral care of those who camped outside them or with the wider work of the peace organizations. But pri orities in pastoral care are of course, decided by the military chaplains.

Church and State

The problem that concerns me is the identification of Church and State. It is not a problem that concerns only military chaplains. We are all responsible for a climate in which acceptance of na tional policies is understood. We cannot even as Christians. Nevertheless, all over the world the evidence is that mili tary chaplains fulfill a role to pro vide pastoral care than to raise moral problems relating to national policies.

Often, it is not believed that there are problems. That becomes clear in the case of Gordon Zahn's remarkable 1969 study of role tension, Chaplains in the RAF. In 1915, the chaplains of the RAF, who was also a military chaplain, said in the newspaper article: 'You ask for my ad vice in a sentence that all the Church is to do. I answer, mobilise the nation for a holy war. The idea of the holy war is still very much alive. The senior chaplain to the South African forces viewed his views clear in his 1979 Christmas mes sage: "Our Defense Force serves the Christ of Christmas and takes up arms to defend this Christmas patron... In this time, no conscientious objector and no pacifist can know before the crip of Bethlehem with a clear conscience." So much for apartheid. During the "dirty war" in the seventeen and eighteen Graham Youll recounts in Portrait of An Exile, a priest went to a military chapel to ask for help. The chaplain reported that this was a crusade against evil and that he should pray for the government's victo ry. Subsequently, he was murdered. Can on Oestreicher, in the summer of 1966, met and discussed the Vietnam war and indirectly the role tension between the sen ior chaplains to the United States Air Force. His comment was: "If the State Department and the Pentagon think we're for peace, they must ask who am I to question their judgment?"

Perhaps one of the most remarkable comments on the military relationship, illuminating the atmosphere of the Church of the day, came from Fr. George Zabek, who served on Tinian Island and was one of those who bombed Hiro shima and Nagasaki. "I was brain-

(Soldiers and Protesters)

The Night Watch at Mutlangen

By AMY CROSS

Mutlangen seems like a lonely place. Mist crawls across the open fields from the last ridges of the forest to its quiet streams. In the West German village the streets are wide and well paved, an improvement the U.S. Armed Forces paid for.

It used to be to farmers could graze their sheep on the grounds of the base. It used to be a young girl would wave at the pilots, even cut across on her way to swimming. The young girl is now an angry woman with a cold stare toward the fence and razor wire that surround the entire perimeter of the base. Within, the United States servicemen feel they are under siege.

They are there to keep Pershing II nuclear missiles safe, to keep peace. At the gate, others keep a vigil against this kind of peace, every hour of every day, wanting to make the world safe from the Pershing II.

Another night passes in this standoff between peace keepers and peace camp ers. At the peace camp the police radio is being monitored. This typewriter is hammering out SOS patterns, and many people are waiting.

At night, I turn my back on the scene and walk on the other side. Down the road a quarter mile is the gate. Before dawn I'm arow a square field of dead core of the road the missile con voy takes from the base. Exposed to the cold, the gravel, the bare trunks of guard light, they protest with their sleep lessness or fitful dreams.

I come to the mesh of linked chains, cars, and some people's private need to slow bolt cutters. The German woman, whose childhood memories these were, is with the group that ask, "Are you going to get them to talk to us?"

"Well, I don't know, maybe if we stay here all day,..." he asks, "and recognize my German ac... I say, for once trying to recall my Kansan twang.

My accent has already crossed the bar rier. From the darkest part of the guard house two booted, olive-bound figures drift our plants himself in front of me. He rocks away. "You mean it's kind of like a new model tank?"

"Well, I don't know, maybe if we stand back and mumbles something polite. Jim says he can't understand him. He asks me a question or two, and tells me what he says in English. They're machine gun, who some times I repeat again across the fence, translating English into Ger manish for people who all speak the language fluently.

&eacute; No news raw on both sides. Words may not be clear, but the hurt and distrust shyness can be seen in everyone's eyes. We're standing around the half circle, wondering why any of us are here. Jim is a little curious about my travels. Strangely enough, it sounds like what the Army promised him at the beginning. You can't miss the sarcasm in his voice when he says, "Don't you touch TV! It's not an adventure."

I tell him I've come to Europe to find out what people really think about the missiles, and that I am confused about what peace is. And when I tell him how frustrating it is to hear the same excuses and see the same anger again, get ting nowhere, I even tell him sometimes I want to write off politicians and the military. How much has beyond it to reach of any of my fears and questions.

"You know? I ask him, and am startled when I realize so. It's so.

He begins to tell me what he thinks about, "I mean, there's Revelations, and that's what's supposed to mean?"

Look, when he signed up for this he didn't know what he was getting into. Pershing II - he thought it was some mistake. He didn't know he'd have to drive it all over the countryside. He didn't know. He didn't think Germany would be like this - those people standing there nerking at him, pointing fingers at him over their shoulders. He knows they're laughing at. And it really makes him angry and there's nothin' he can do about it. What do you think he's going to say?

This man is pleading with me, with an automatic rifle strapped to his back. I hope he finds what he's been looking for, the hurt from his eyes, but it doesn't.

"I think they are afraid like you are; and don't know what to do or who is in command."

That sinks into both of us for awhile. Jim breaks the silence, "You know, I don't think I'm gonna let them push the button."

I'm looking at Jim through the links, wide awake. I remember how the cooperation started the day he said what he said then. I can't do much more than that now.

The radio crackles. There is a crunch of boots behind Jim. His replacement has come. He can now get some sleep for some hours. I turn a bank of clouds, slate grey; rides into the early morning light. Swirls and wisps edge the gaping breach in night's command.

I have a talk with him and tell him I am glad I met him. The light grows ever wider as we walk away.
We understand Jonah in contemporary terms. He knows that men are evil; he knows they deserve punishment; he also knows that God is capable of inflicting it. Nineveh has done much harm to Israel; Jonah, the Jew, might have wished to serve as an emissary of vengeance and retribution. But, paradoxically, Jonah, the Jew, might have wished to serve as an emissary of mercy.

In practice, judges who are part of the group have tended to convict defendants in peace actions, but release them without punishment. They are empowered to declare them not-guilty as a matter of conscience, but this rule regulates an appeal to another court, which the defendants have to pay for, and which would likely be granted. Ulf Panzer, a district court judge in Hamburg, who is an active member of Judges and Prosecutors for Peace, has yet to have a peace activist appear before him, but if one did, he has vowed to refuse to open the trial, saying that a trial cannot be opened if a law is violated, and, in such a case, he cannot see any law violated. He states: If we resist, resist nuclear arms, you are on the right side of the law. So the term "civil disobedience" just isn’t appropriate. You are obeying the law by resisting nuclear arms.

After members of the Silo Pruning Hooks action in the United States received stiff sentences, ranging up to eighteen years in prison for their acts of nonviolent resistance to preparations for war. In the words of Judge Panzer:

"We strongly oppose the silent preparations for war which are now beginning to take place in our country. That means new laws to build atomic shelters in every new house and every new building. New laws to provide for workers, trucks, other means of transportation and support for soldiers and the military machine in times of crisis or even war. New laws that prohibit people from leaving their towns and cities or even their homes to prevent a war. And all the clerks are the instruments to legalize all these preparations. We want to say NO! We have been a docile in-ternational community and smile at and passed by. The earth remains in safety. Or so I thought. Even now—after I have looked upon the towers—I do not feel afraid from day to day. Would it help if I did?

Soon I must go to court and talk to a judge, a mortal like me. For earthly courts and mortal judges, you give me lots of angry words. Or are they only my words? I hear that you also have a court (Psalm 84:2), but I don't know how to understand that. Our law, the law of A or B or C, is too simple to account: "A person fails to take reasonable measures to prevent or mitigate widespread injury or damage commits a crime..." if you or she or he did or assented to the act causing or threatening the injury or damage." (N.J.S. 2C:17-2) Is your law more difficult to obey than that?

You promise to break the pride of our power. (Lev. 26:19) But where did the power come from? Was it always there, or did you put it there for us to discover? Didn't you know that we would find it? Can only planet-splitting pride suffice to test such day souls? With our carelessness and blindness and greed, we let thousands of our children die every day. Yet still you wait to see what we will do? Have we not proved beyond any doubt to be hopeless failures? Is there more disaster, is there disaster after disaster, still left to unfold in this corner of creation, before you bring it all to an end? Must we die before the land can have its Sabbath? (Lev. 26:34-35)

I know that you will not answer these questions for me, a frail and fallible and unworthy creature. You give me only a suspicion that there is a chance things may not be completely lost. So, for that suspicion, if it is from you, and for that chance, if it exists, I set my face against the towers, and put my message, which I hope is your message, on their wall: Keep Three Mile Island Shut Down.

If it is only pride that makes me so bold, then I am ready for that pride to be broken, as you promise. If, on the other hand, it is not pride, but obedience to you, then I ask that you give others some of the urgency you have given in the many questions for one person to ask, too many things "too wonderful" for me to learn.
No Holy War—The Chaplain’s Role

By KATHARINE TEMPLE

In a parish Bible study on Amos, right at the part where the nations are charged for plundering other people’s lands and for the treatment of exiles, someone, actually a rather conservative soul, broke in to comment, "That sounds like American foreign policy." There was a bit of a pause until the priest asked, "Why do you pick on the USA and ignore the USSR?" Another pause, and then, "Well, it does sound more like American policy than we’d care to admit. And, anyway, my guess is that the Bible is speaking to us, to and even at the workings of our own Church. If the Church, as a whole, main—

The 1971 Synod of Bishops said, in ringing terms, that the Gospel has a power to detach us from all sin and to point the same finger at our own society."

In this regard our lack of fairness, and in maintaining a critical indepen—

And so, in maintaining a critical independence, I sympathise genuinely for the Church, as a whole, to take a more detached approach to national problems. But not only can they not offer unconditional obedience, they have to face many other difficult issues as well. What does a chaplain say to someone in Northern Ireland: "No, no, if every soldier questioned his orders where would we get to?" Where indeed. Yet the British Manual of Military Law advises services—men that they might have to make a choice. "They cannot escape liability if, in conscience, they refuse to do those acts which violate the unchallenged rules of warfare.

Christian members of the armed forces have a place in the community of the Church which is, in all official documents, a respected element of the Church. But not only can they not offer unconditional obedience, they have to face many other difficult issues as well. What does a chaplain say to a young man or woman about to go on a naval cruise which is intended to promote the export of weapons to the United States? Or, to the British task force went into action? What is a chaplain to say to someone in Northern Ireland to the point of black propaganda? What is he to say to the crew of a Polaris submarine— that they can go through all the motions but must never actually fire those instruments of mass murder? What is he to say if military situations with South West Africa assume a first use by NATO of nuclear weapons? Perhaps these questions do not often get asked. Were there no questions from the British Government about the morality and the legality of the American air raid, from bases in our country, on Libya earlier this year?

I think it is absolutely objected that I have confined myself to the culpability of the United States and have neglected the crimes of other nations or even especially those under communist influence. In reply, I can only ask how the crimes of others in any way detract from our own. Why concentrate on the crimes of others when they are constantly taking the same society and holding? Finally, why protest against crimes one can do almost nothing about instead of those one might, in concert with others, still do something to rectify?

From a slightly different perspective, Dr. Sidney Lens, in his book, "Why Do We Have an Arms Race?" wrote:

"... We in the United States try to achieve the same ends through different techniques: free trade, or repressive economic measures, to give some examples. He asks, "Why Do We Have an Arms Race?" CW, March-April 1986) is correct in listing these outrages, but why is this thinking so monolithic? Why can Mr. Lens so easily recognize the crimes of one superpower and not recognize those of the others?

The road to clarity has many pitfalls, and global political reporting is a very slippery thing. On this very question, there is a fine ar—

Chris tian reflection about the academic and student world. Perhaps it would help the students if military chaplains had regular dialogue with movements like the United Nations Association, the Campaign Against the Arms Race, the Council on World Security, the CND and Pax Christi. We all face an increasingly dangerous world in which no amount of international agreements can solve accidents or miscalculations, and in which we could radically improve the lives of the poor if only we could start to turn swords into plowshares.

Notes in Brief

THE MILITARY, AND DRAFT REGISTRATION

Each year over 500,000 people enlist in the U.S. Military, and every male is legal—

For persons struggling with the morality of the draft. The War Resisters League, 339 Lafayette Street, New York, NY 10012, has a high school organizing packet, giving strategies for increasing student awareness of the draft registration. The National Interreligious Service Board for Conscientious Objectors (NISBCO), 940 15th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20006, publishes a newsletter, The Reporter for Conscience, covering draft issues, particularly draft counseling referrals, lists of on-site organizations which could be taken.

Other organizations with resources on militarily related issues include: the American Friends Service Committee, 1501 Cherry Street, Philadelphia, PA 19102, and the Committee Against Registration and the War (CARD), 201 Massachusetts Ave.

RESIST NUCLEAR TESTING

The Nevada Desert Experience continues to help focus resistance to continued nuclear testing, at the site where all U.S. testing is done. The County of a Franciscan commitment to raise pub—

No Violence Conference in January, also in the San Francisco area, with George Lamont as the keynote speaker. Lenten Desert Experience VI, March 4-10, 1987, to observe the season of Lent at the test site in prayer, discussion and action.

August Desert Witness III to com—

For information contact: Nevada Desert Experience, P.O. Box 4487, Las Vegas, NV 89127, (702) 646-4814.
Mercy was not a sentimental person but her affection was indeed apparent. In her was the biblical welcome stranger, the sisterly embrace. This is not to sug-
gest that she did not have her “moments” of impatience, or in her own assessment of this cross, her periods of being “anxi-
lous.” Yet they remained moments, never to be seen as the preferred response to life or loss. All roads led back to the church, the window there, her desert. From it she could hear and see the suffer-
ing of the world, so close to the Blessed Sacrament. The place of her Lord. He knew, for Mercy told Him.
It was this past 14th of September that the thirteenth anniversary of the Sisters’ lives on the Lower East Side was cele-
brated. Someone commented that Mercy was only staying alive for the Mass on the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, one last time. We who were present with her in that chapel knew there were more anniversaries like this one. She sat with Eileen, Sister Robert Marie (a more recent member of the order), St. Mary’s, and friends who were gathered from many parts of her New York City life. It was as if she were already beyond our reach. De-
spite our certainty of her passing, there was a distant look about her that still took us by surprise. This moment was our thanksgiving for eliciting the spaces be-
tween our heartbeats, and the silence in the chapel between our hymnals and peti-
tions. It was as if she was ready to go. She had a peace.
Her well-worn heart had been used thus been saved. It is an ugly giant, sharpening its teeth and other worlds where fire also burns.

Author: John C. Cort

Boycott Grapes!

BY JOHN C. CORT

Sidney Lens died last summer. An amazing man, and a good one. A self-pro-
claimed atheist, he contributed regularly to religious publications, including The
Catholic Worker and The National Catholi-
c Reporter. A card-carrying Leninist and Trotskyist for much of his life, “his
ultimate commitment was to nonvio-
ce,” in the words of Father Bill Hogan, long associated with him in the Chicago
Peace Council.
The man he loved and admired more than any other was A. J. Muste, another
former Trotskyist who returned to his Christian faith and used to say things
like “I can’t love Hitler, I can’t love all
One of the most moving passages in Sidney Lens’ autobiography, Im-
tant Radical (Beacon Press, 1980), is his tribute to A. J. Muste, which is worth
quoting at length because we can all use this medicine:
He was a humanist in the revolu-
tionary sense that he never—absolutely never—deliberately denigrated an-
other person. He believed not only in physical nonviolence, but, more im-
portant, in psychological nonviol-
ce— and he practiced it. I was with Muste on occasions when he ar-
gued with political adversaries rang-
ing from traditional conservatives to Stalinists, but no one ever walked away from such an “argument” feel-
ing hurt or demeaned. He was al-
ways careful not to trample someone else’s ego — not only as a matter of prin-
ciple but because he had so much inner self-confidence (more than anyone I’ve ever known) that he didn’t have to.
Just incidentally, another admirer of A. J. Muste was Peter Maurin, and Muste
returned the admiration and used to loan his Labor Temple on 14th Street to the
Catholic Worker for meetings when the Mott Street quarters were inadequate.
Lens was that rare individual, an activist
and polemicist who was also a compe-
tent and conscientious scholar. Too
many of us who lean toward polemical
writing, reveal our inanity and slipshod workmanship by writing and talking in conclu-
sions, judgments and indictments
without marshaling the facts to support
these conclusions, judgments and indict-
ments.
Take, for example, Lens’ piece for the
CW of March/April 1966, one of the last arti-

cles he wrote before his death. “Why
Do We Have an Arms Race?” Whether
you agree with his conclusion or not—the conversation was not that easy—his
arms race is economic imperialism on the part of the U.S.—you must admit that he
has presented facts to support his
assertion. The facts that “U.S. exports grew from $3 billion before [World War
II] to $43 billion in 1970 (and $220 billion by 1983) and its foreign investments
reached similar peaks.”
He mentions five forms of U.S. inter-
ventionism and illustrates each by ex-
amples, such as the fact that “at one
time the U.S. was supplying arms to and
training military forces in 69 coun-
tries.” Sidney Lens was such a good organizer and union official that he could find
the time to be an accomplished love activity
with the writing of twenty-three books
and visits to over one hundred countries. (As a former union official and
self-confessed union organizer, I
wonder how he did it?) He also found
time to write hundreds of articles and to organize and lead, or so it seemed, antibourgeois projects such as the
institutions that were the core of
the militant organizations for Survival and the National Mobilization
Committee to End the War. One aspect of his life story I must dif-
fierentiate.

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To which one can only add, Amen. May he rest in the peace he worked and strug-
gled so hard to win for others.

Author: Jeannine Dart

Page Seven

October-November 1986

THE CATHOLIC WORKER

Her Name Was Mercy & Known to Many

Car to Maryknoll’s center

New York: the city that never sleeps.

Page Seven

October-November 1986

THE CATHOLIC WORKER

Her Name Was Mercy & Known to Many

Car to Maryknoll’s center

New York: the city that never sleeps.
Emmanuel Mounier 

Personalist

(Continued from page 2)

"the primacy of the Spiritual." What was it that Mounier and his friends hoped to accomplish?

According to its founder, the task of Esprit was to make its readers aware of "the established disorder of what he termed "the bourgeois age." This was an age which he characterized by egoism, greed and complacency. Worst of all, "the bourgeois age" made "the spiritual refuge a mere toll to vital life force." To paraphrase Mounier, modern society had done away with the idea of sanctity and self-sacrifice. This had resulted in a mad chase after personal glory. It praised easy success rather than silent heroism; it substituted eroticism for love, and a sterile, intellectual character. Finally, modern society only

believed in "sacred sincerity" and no longer had an "intransigent passion for the truth."

This decade demanded a total revision of values so that greed, violence, pettiness and mediocrity could be eradicated from the hearts of men and women. This revision was the step towards confronting the enormous educational problem that was as grave as the many injustices of "the bourgeois age." A profound revision of all values was to be Esprit's work, to, in Mounier's words, "dissociate Christianity from the established disorder so that Christians may restore Christian values to their full stature and recover their revolutionary potential."

Mounier contemplated a time when political action would be called for. But he demanded of it very high standards and a peculiarly aristocratic political action. Political action had to be founded on two principles, the first is that we will act by what we are, as much and more, than by what we will do and say. The second [principle] is that our action is not directed essentially toward success but toward bearing witness."

Esprit immediately caused a tremendous stir in French Catholic circles at the time. A new journal was published, which said that "a struggle in which no quarter is given must be waged against the totalitarian spirit." Several issues of the review continued to appear before it was closed down by the Vichy government. He wrote, "I have never felt Esprit to be more present, stronger, or more alive than this evening when they think they have killed it ... I have no doubt that, on the third day, Esprit will rise from the dead in whatever form God wishes it to take.

Mounier joined the Resistance and was arrested in January 1942. During his imprisonment he went on a hunger strike to help some other prisoners. In November he was released and returned to his family and his writing.

Many of Mounier's friends hoped at the end of the war that he would devote himself to the intellectual task of developing the philosophy of personalism. Although he was able to complete some work, his talent went mostly into reviving Esprit and plunging back into journalism. At the time many people were surprised to announce as former collaborators with the Nazis and summarily executed across Europe. Esprit was one of the first post-war publications to condemn the spirit of revenge that followed Liberation. Mounier's editorial courage is credited with saving many Jewish lives.

Many lay Christian organizations of workers and intellectuals were forming political parties that wanted to implement the ideas that had been born in the Resistance. One such idea was "humanization" of the working classes. Mounier participated in a program of many Christian groups that formed what came to be called the New Catholic Left. Many of these groups, named the Christian Progressive party, went so far as to claim that his immediate motto was "to be of the Church, in progressivism, with the Communists."

Mounier quickly returned in the pages of Esprit that, "we do not think that the only revolutionary engagement is in the Communist party, or that it is the only revolutionary action that is political action." Although he explicitly dissociated himself from the "bourgeois" side of the Christian Progressives, Mounier did believe that some aspects of the "bourgeois" wing recognized "Marxism as an acute description of the social and technical status of man." And he deplored the alienation and the life of the worker movement is impregnated by personalism. Mounier's respect for the working class, his sensitivity to their sufferings during the Depression, throughout the war, and now, in a devastated post-war made Esprit a leader of the Christian Left, including the Christian Progressives. Mounier did not see in any reason to repudiate his views on Communism, and Esprit was not repudiated explicitly by Church authorities.

Mounier's politics and philosophy continued to be embraced in collaboration with the Church and caused severe antagonisms with those on the Left. In 1949, at the National Congress of the Communist Party, its leader, Maurice Thorez, asked that Christians like Emmanuel Mounier, well-known for his critiques of bourgeois society, join with the Communists. Mounier's response, printed in a letter to a worker-priest friend of his, was a flat refusal. For this he was vehemently attacked as an "anti-Communist Machiavel," a disguised supporter of "American imperialism," an "idealist in a league with fascists." These charges appeared in L'Humanite, the French communist newspaper, and were answered in Pravda.

In 1953, Mounier married Paullette Leclerc; together, they discovered a means of entering into the suffering and struggles of the workers. They have vainly tried to work for truth and justice, "with entire faith in Christ so long as we do not take our place alongside those outcasts. ... With Esprit, I manage to say, near you. Do not think I want [to make] a token payment for a clear conscience, but I would like to do my little, to give at least a little, and to prepare myself for the day on which events will, perhaps, compel us to give everything."

In November of that same year, Emmanuel Mounier suffered a fatal heart attack and died at the age of forty-five.

NEW CATHOLIC WORKER HOUSES

Recently we have been pleased to hear from Catholic Worker groups in other parts of the country who are just getting started: Mary McShane, 1502 Arapahoe St., Boulder, Colorado; Esther Dan, Justin and Carrie Moore opened the St. Francis Catholic Worker house on October 4th, at 916 2nd Street, North, St. Peter, FL 33701. In mid-September the Las Vegas Catholic Worker, St. John Baptist House was opened at 1309 Gold Avenue, Las Vegas, NV 89106. Michael and Margaret Quigley Garvey and friends have begun a C.W. venture in Southington, Conn. as they have contacted the Rev. Michael G. Garvey, St. Joseph Church, 816 Almond Court, South Bend, IN 46617.

People are praying for all these works of mercy and justice, that they may be sustained and strengthened in the Lord.

St. Joseph House

(Continued from page 2)

The Sower

Susan MacMurdy

playing with baby Daniel! He has since returned to the campus to continue for yet another year. Te amantes Dennis! Meg Hyre was also home for a brief portion of the summer. We'll miss her friendship and spirit of reconciliation which she gave to us (and, hopefully, we'll remember her childhood days! We did have a small donation of Esprit, was a flat refusal. For this he was vehemently attacked as an "anti-Communist Machiavel," a disguised supporter of "American imperialism," an "idealist in a league with fascists." These charges appeared in L'Humanite, the French communist newspaper, and were answered in Pravda.

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St. Joseph House

(Continued from page 2)

have arrived at a better time. Thank you, St. Joseph. Some final good news is that Kenneth Busch, M.D., Christ Church Desert Monastery and will be heading west sometime next month to be with their primitive Benedictine community. We'll miss him especially his growing affinity for black clothing and his devotion to the Little Flower, both of which he inherited from his parents.

In Tale of Two Cities, Dickens writes that "these are the best of times, these are the worst of times." I suspect there is a lot of truth in this as it applies to us here, now. One of my favorite (and over-used and abused) words is "special" - there are so many special people here at the Worker. In fact, everybody is so very special to me, each in their own special way. That's what I enjoy about this work. It's so difficult, all of the discussions, the dissent, the breaks and the healings, the good and the greys. It's a part of that long loneliness of which Dorothy Day spoke, and which we all have to live with. And if we do not have one day before she died, St. Therese of Lisieux said to her spiritual director, "I am no longer young, I live only by love. May God's truth, of the primacy of love in all things, bring us closer to one another, and to God.