

# Camille Berg

## A LEGACY OF LOYALTY



by J. M. Haffert

I was supervising completion of a 120 room building at Fatima, as a world center for spreading the Fatima message, and needed a hotelier to care for the section of the house to accommodate pilgrims. They would be strained to capacity when Cardinal Tisserant, as Legate of Pins XII, would bless the new building on October 13th, anniversary of the Fatima miracle.

In answer to our inquiry, the Portuguese Government recommended a professional manager named Camille Berg. He was a Luxembourger, then managing the first small hotel at Fatima, in 1956.

### Refused Double Salary

I took a room in the Fatima Hotel to observe his ability, and two days later offered to double his salary to take over the new world center of the Blue Army being built behind the Basilica.

A shadow crossed Mr. Berg's face. Obviously, he wanted to better himself, but he said:

"I don't think the family owning this hotel could get someone to replace me within the two months before October 13th, which is also an important date for them, so I could only accept after that time."

We waited.

### Never Regretted!

Somehow, we got by with the October  
March-April 1971

13th inauguration, using caterers. We felt that for a man of Mr. Berg's ability and loyalty the extra effort was worthwhile.

We never regretted that effort or that decision.

How can one describe fourteen years of wonderful service and loyalty?

Sometimes we find ourselves saying beautiful things about worthy people only after they die, but it was just three weeks before his death, at an important ceremony before a select audience at Ave Maria Institute, National Center of the Blue Army in the United States, that I said in the presence of Camille and his wife:

"Fourteen years ago, I determined to wait for Camille because of his ability and loyalty. Through victories and defeats, we have been at one another's side. He has been of inestimable benefit to the apostolate and to me."

### Two Years Siberia

Camille always had a fixed goal before him. During the war, in Berlin, he was assistant to the manager of one of the most famous hotels in Europe even though only 20 years of age. As things went badly for Hitler, the Luxembourg men (although known to be anti-Nazi) were given six weeks of training and sent to the Russian front to defend themselves or die. Camille was the only man of his entire regiment to survive. He spent the last

two years of the war as a prisoner in Siberia.

Scarred by the war and the cold of Siberia, he determined to go to a warm country, after completing his hotel management training in Switzerland. On an exploratory trip to Madrid he met the gifted and educated Marguerite Ramos, who told him about Portugal, where her grandfather was an admiral in the navy, her father a prominent importer, and she a trained nurse.

A year later, Camille and Marguerite were married.

When the young couple came to Fatima, Camille was touched by the great promise made by Heaven to the world from this mountain — that Russia would be converted and peace would come to all mankind.

Inevitably, his work became interwoven with the apostolate.

His only child, born at Fatima, was named after the great Count of Ourem, Blessed Nuno, whose biography I had written before the war and because of which I myself had become involved in Fatima. And I was privileged to be Godfather to the Nuno of Marguerite and Camille.

### Fatima Effect

In a short time after beginning work for the Blue Army at Fatima, Camille received better offers of employment,

including a managerial position with a restaurant chain in America.

Unwilling to lose a man of such ability and loyalty — — — at least as a counselor for the house at Fatima — — — I decided to enlarge our travel agency in America, and thus keep Camille at my side.

The Agency became one of the few "million dollar" agencies in America.

Shortly before his death, Camille and I had just completed one of our greatest travel ventures: a charter flight to all the six continents of the world with 125 pilgrims and the Bishop of Fatima. Crowns were presented to the Bishops of many nations to be used simultaneously on May 13, 1971, to celebrate the silver jubilee of the Queenship of Our Lady of Fatima.

### One Loose End

The trip was the most successful of a series of similar trips over a period of four years with the Bishop of Fatima. And there was only one "loose end" still worrying us. No ceremony had yet been planned in France for next May 13th.

After my last conversation with Camille, he flew to Lisbon with Marguerite and Nuno, en route to Luxembourg to spend the first Christmas in 25 years with his mother. The day after he arrived in Lisbon, he

travelled the 90 miles from Lisbon up to the Bishop's House.

### Collapses Before Bishop

He had just finished conveying our message about France and hearing the Bishop acquiesce to the plan, when he collapsed at the Bishop's feet. The Bishop rushed him to the hospital.

He seemed to rally after the operation and dictated a letter for me to his wife, Marguerite. It indicated that he had learned to his dismay, the first day in Portugal, that work was not progressing on a project we had recently undertaken at the Castle of Ourem to attract many more tourists to Fatima.

When I arrived in Lisbon the following week, I was amazed to learn that he had become weaker, although at first he had seemed to be recovering well. He had been constantly talking about the delays encountered with the Castle program. Twice, Marguerite said, he had tried to get up from bed, saying that he had to go and take care of things at Ourem.

His heart was failing, and I was with him when he received the Last Sacrament.

Later in the evening he began to sleep peacefully, and I left the following day for Ourem to face some of the problems that worried him so. I had

assured him that he had no need to worry. I would "take care of everything".

I believe these were the last words he heard me say. He tried to answer, and even though I bent close I could not hear his words.

### Providential

Camille's friends are scattered all over the world. He has hundreds in America. But certainly his closest circle of "family" is in Europe, and most of those closest to him were there on that beautiful, sunny January 1, 1971, when Camille was laid to rest in the Portugal he loved so much. Personally representing the Bishop of Fatima was the Very Rev. Canon Jose Galamba de Oliveira, one of the most important persons connected with the history of Fatima.

The Hand of Providence was obvious.

Camille had intended to build his retirement home in Portugal this same year. He had already trained others to carry on the work of the travel agency! And, as we review his plans, we see the workings of his ability and loyalty continuing even after his death.

Portugal and the world have been deeply enriched by a very great man who served wherever service was needed, and who died in anxiety for plans to increase the flow of visitors to Fatima.

## EDITORIAL

It was difficult for me to write this brief obituary. It was twelve days after Camille's death that I finally pulled myself together, evaluated problems about continuing the work and went to the Bishop of Fatima for advice.

The Bishop shared my grief and said he had something to show me.

It was a letter just arrived from France, unopened. It was a reply to the petition Camille had carried on the day of his collapse. And the Bishop told me something I had not known: "I myself had been ill for two weeks but Camille had said he had a communication from you of major importance. So I dressed and came to the parlor,

where I found him white and fainting. Shocked by his appearance I wanted to call a doctor but he said: 'It will pass. This letter from John... I promised to bring it personally. He says it should be sent to France at once.'

"I assured him I would send the letter even as he collapsed.

"I did send the letter that same day, after getting Camille to a clinic. I learned that he had hemorrhaged in Lisbon just before driving all the way up to Leiria with the letter."

(Note: While the Blue Army has an important centre in France, no French Bishop had accepted the National Pilgrim Virgin. And two

years of preparation had preceded this letter.)

The Bishop of Fatima then handed me the reply he had just received, saying: "You may read it first".

It was from the Bishop of Laval. It said: Next May 13, THE NATIONAL PILGRIM VIRGIN OF FRANCE WILL BE CROWNED AT THE SANCTUARY OF PONTMAIN, WHERE ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO OUR LADY APPEARED CROWNED IN THE SKY, surrounded by stars, offering the hope of peace to the world.

Camille, who had suffered much in life, especially during two years in Siberia, died at the feet of the Bishop of Fatima - serving the Queen of the world.