

In Sundry Times and Places

Dorothy Day

The Catholic Worker, June 1942, 4.

Summary: Contrasts the scenic countryside as she travels by bus and Phil. 4:8-9 with a magazine article description of commando training in England. (DDLW #219).

Glendive, Montana, May 29, 3:30 a.m.

All around stretch the sugar beet fields (for which is proposed Japanese labor). In the East the sky is apple green. A brisk wind blows down the main street as I wait for a bus to take me on to Minneapolis. It will get in at 10:30 tonight. It takes two days across this third largest state in the union.

Even in the smallest towns one does not get away from the war. Man power diminished, homes broken up. In every bus there are soldiers and sailors going home for, or returning from, leave.

My seat companion, a blonde Scandinavian girl from Minnesota, who has slept in the most relaxed way all day yesterday against me, offers me a magazine to read. It is the *Cosmopolitan*. I had just been reading Father Stedman's little edition of the New Testament—some beautiful lines from St. Paul's epistle to the Philippians.

One of the first articles in the magazine which struck my eye was on the training of the commandos over in England, teaching young men to be "hard-bitten, ferocious, tough, ruthless, learning to kill the way the enemy kills."

The new tactics in training introduced by Sir James Grigg, Minister of War, include turning God's beautiful countryside into a "modern hell." Animals entrails obtained from a local slaughter house, hung on barbed wire to simulate the sights and smells of modern battlefields.

"Loudspeakers blare out noises of modern battle. The roar of planes, the scream sirens make as dive-bombers roar down at you, shrieks of the wounded, moans of the dying..." Men going into action without food, drink or sleep.

Instructors goading men on with insult and recriminations. What's the matter? Are you afraid? Yellow, eh? Remember Dunkirk? Remember Crete where they killed your brother! Remember Hong King where they raped your sister! You're soft! You're yellow! They'll rape your mother if you don't catch them. Why are you waiting. Hurry, you're late, you're soft, you're yellow!"

"The article goes on to describe the mad frenzy of the men ... They got almost maniacal." Bayonets to be taken away because "battle-maddened students got too realistic and charged anyone in sight."

The article is entitled: “Every Man a Commando.”

On all sides of me were scenes of beauty as I read. Snowcapped mountains, birds singing on fenceposts, herds of sheep, swollen streams, lush pastures, blue skies and a long road ahead.

Think on These Things

And the passage that I had been reading in the New Testament, Phil. 4: 8-9, was:

“Whatever things are true, whatever honorable, whatever just, whatever holy, whatever lovable, whatever of good repute, if there be any virtue, if anything worthy of praise, think on these things. And what you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, these things practice. And the God of peace will be with you.”

A far cry indeed!