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Agnes Smedley  
John McCaffery  
BATTLE HYMN OF CHINA

I-12

WMCA  
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[12]

ANNOUNCER: Fighting Words

SMEDLEY: "I tried to deliver a message that would bring courage and conviction to men who must fight and perhaps fall. Brushing aside the confusion in my own country, I tried to conjur up a picture in which millions of common people and a few enlightened leaders like President Roosevelt sympathized with and supported China. I told half lies, I strung together news reports of a boycott of Japanese goods, and <sup>of</sup> organizations collecting money for China. Had I spoken the truth my speech would have been a cry that sounded something like this: Brothers, I am a citizen of a country that is supplying your enemy with a means of killing you and your people. We have had great teachers of human liberty, and the foundation of my country is revolutionary. Yet, my people in America know less of the world than you, though you perhaps cannot read."

ANNOUNCER: Those are the fighting words of Agnes Smedley in her book, BATTLE HYMN OF CHINA, to be published September 7th. Miss Smedley is here tonight to be interviewed by John K.M. McCaffery who each week talks with the men and women who are writing the fighting words of this war. Mr. McCaffery.....

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MCCAFFERY: The words spoken by Agnes Smedley at the beginning of this program were addressed to a Chinese Army back in 1939 at the time when most Americans were not much disturbed about the scrap metal we were sending to Japan. Agnes Smedley had been in China since 1929 as a newspaper correspondent. When the Japanese invaded China she went to the front and served as a field member of the Chinese Red Cross Medical Corps in the war zones, <sup>and as a foreign correspondent -</sup> She lived and marched with the soldiers of China and she saw fighting China as few white people have seen it. She returned to America when she became too ill <sup>from</sup> malnutrition and malaria to go on working. BATTLE HYMN OF CHINA is a long book because it covers twelve years of Chinese history. We have fifteen minutes to discuss this story with Agnes Smedley, and I am sure that we cannot give you more than a glimpse of the heroic and indomitable Chinese fighters. Miss Smedley perhaps you can tell us what you

MCCAFFERTY (contd) set out to do in Battle Hymn of China.

SMEDLEY: I ~~was trying to give a picture of a picture perhaps~~ <sup>tried</sup> weave a tapestry ~~rather~~ -of the lives, thoughts, hopes and sorrows of millions of ~~the Chinese people and of the Chinese soldiers. with whom I lived for~~ <sup>civilians and</sup> years. I wanted Americans to learn that, ~~apart from officials and the~~ ~~Chinese ruling class in general,~~ the common people and ~~the~~ <sup>of China</sup> soldiers are much like us--~~that is, direct, frank,~~ not mysterious and subtle and with ways that are dark and mean. ~~I also wanted to show how hungry the Chinese soldiers and people are for knowledge and how very intelligent they are.~~

MCCAFFERTY: One of the things your book revealed to me was that there are plenty of leaders in China. I don't know why, but I had assumed that they were handicapped by lack of leadership.

SMEDLEY: I'm glad you mentioned that, Mr. McCaffery, because I find that Americans have many strange ideas of this nature. ~~Some Americans think that we must lead China. I assure you that some of them could well teach us a lot.~~ I saw many young leaders who had organized whole communities into deadly efficient guerrilla units, ~~and whole regions into something like a closed fist against the Japanese.~~ China's long struggle has produced and developed countless <sup>capable</sup> men and women. ~~xxxxxxx~~ Since the war began, also, there has been a great intellectual awakening of the people.

MCCAFFERTY: It amazed me that people who were fighting so desperately were still able to spend the little free time they had in organized study.

SMEDLEY: How else should they spend their free time? They are fighting for their very life against a powerfully-equipped enemy. So the Chinese must strengthen themselves by knowledge and thought. You see, each Army is supposed to have a political department whose duty it is to inform and impart knowledge of every kind to the soldiers; and to create close cooperation between the armies and the civilian population. The guerrilla armies, the Eighth Route and New Fourth, and some of the regular national armies, have highly developed political departments

with educated men and women in charge. The guerrilla armies have thousands of such men and women, active over vast territories. These political departments impart ~~knowledge~~ general and specific knowledge ~~of~~ ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ which is designed to give the soldiers--and the common people--something to fight and die for if necessary. They have big training camps in which they teach the history of the war, the history of China's relations with Japan and other foreign countries; various political theories, the first of them the principles of the late Dr. Sun Yat-sen; also theories of democracy and socialism; and the nature ~~of~~ and practices of Fascism and Fascist countries are taught. The guerrilla armies also had courses in "the history of human progress" and even in natural science. Then they taught methods of organization, guerrilla tactics, and everything they learned about the practices of the Japanese Army.

MCCAFFERY: That sounds like a pretty advanced curriculum. I thought that many of these soldiers couldn't read and write.

SMEDLEY: They are taught reading and writing in the Army, if they cannot.

In the past six years, I think that much of China's illiteracy has been liquidated. I saw whole armies engaging in what they called competitions in reading and writing. But illiteracy is a thing ~~entirely~~ apart from general knowledge and information, which is imparted to all. The best armies have their own newspapers and magazines and the fighting companies, battalions or regiments, create what they call ~~new~~ wall newspapers. That is, they take squares of paper and write their war experiences, essays, poems, songs, or just jot down their ideas, and paste these up on a <sup>large</sup> piece of paper like a bulletin board. Since many educated youth are gifted artists, some such wall newspapers are often cleverly illustrated.

MCCAFFERY: The only parallel I can think of is a frivolous one. The American equivalent would be the pin-up art we hear so much about.

SMEDLEY: ~~involved~~ yes--significantly so. From what I've read, according to some of our correspondents, many of our soldiers hardly know what the war is about and they could not define Fascism or Naziism if you asked them. We Americans seem to think that political thought should be left to intriguing politicians many of whom have the political ~~morals~~ morals of monkeys in a cage. Like dopes, we've surrendered our country to them. The Chinese won't. Many young democratic leaders have come out of China's war.

MCCAFFERY: In the guerrilla armies there seems to be little distinctions between the soldiers and civilians. In the rear of the enemy where the guerrillas operate, the army takes pretty complete charge, doesn't it?

SMEDLEY: Well, they ~~organizes~~ organize, train, and lead the people in resistance to the enemy. I saw captured Japanese documents warning the Japanese soldiers to beware of every Chinese; one said that the Chinese are so base, so low, that even women fight the Japanese with hand-grenades. The guerrilla armies spring from the common people and their medical service is at the service of the common people without charge. Some of the regular armies also take care of civilian air-raid victims.

MCCAFFERY: I think that what you have said gives us a good general idea of why the Chinese Army fights so well. In your book there are so many vivid stories of individual Chinese heroes that I'd like to have you talk about some of them. . . about the little Chinese boy you tried to adopt, for instance.

SMEDLEY: Well, this child was a war orphan who had become a "hsiao kwey", or so-called "little devil" in a guerrilla Army, the Storm Guerrilla Detachment of the New Fourth Army. When I first reached this detachment this little boy was assigned to me as an orderly.

MCCAFFERY: How old was he?

SMEDLEY: Ten or eleven. He wasn't sure. The guerrilla armies took in a number of homeless children and let them serve as orderlies. Of course one doesn't want a child to serve one or to be exposed to the hazards of war.

MCCAFFERY: It seems to me that children would just encumber an army that was on the march.

SMEDLEY: The guerrilla armies generally have stable mountain bases--they aren't always on the march. Something has to be done with the countless war orphans. I also found one regular army that had ~~xxxxxxx~~ adopted 700 war-orphans and was educating ~~and training~~ them in a mountain base. There, as in the guerrilla armies, the children did small chores and the rest of the time studied. Many of them grew up in the Army and in time would become guards around headquarters; later lower or higher commanders, according to their training and experience and ability. It sounds like a sad situation, but I could see no other path for many such children. Army life in China is not so bad as factory life in which little children work. Because the children of the common people always must bear the burden of adults and bear the brunt of the misfortunes of the war, they are often a strange combination of childhood and manhood. My little boy's name was Kuo Hwa. He looked younger than his age, but explained that he's never had enough to eat and had been sick when he had been a beggar boy. That was long before, after bandits had burned his home, killing his father and injuring his mother. His two elder brothers were soldiers and Kuo Hwa had begged to earn a living for himself and his injured mother. Kuo Hwa took many sad things for granted.

MCCAFFERY: How did he come to be with the Army?

SMEDLEY: He once heard some soldiers talking about a poor man's army where everyone learned to read and write. He dogged the footsteps of one soldier until the soldier let him go with him to the guerrilla camp. When I first met Kuo Hwa he asked me: "Are you a foreign imperialist?" When I said I was not, we became good friends. That question shows something of what he had learned in the Army.

MCCAFFERY: Then you tried to adopt him?

SMEDLEY: Yes, when I left that Army, I told him I would send him to a school where he would be away from the dangers of war. But he refused to go. He said: "I think all men must now remain

SMEDLEY (CONT): at the front. You can adopt me after the victory." Before I left, I arranged for my ~~him~~ <sup>him</sup> to join the children's dramatic corps. A young teacher was in charge of these children who spent half the day studying and the other half writing and rehearsing patriotic plays and songs.

MCCAFFERY: Will you tell us, Miss Smedley, about one or two of the soldiers and officers you knew so well? *You wrote about a ~~ex~~ major-General Chung-*

SMEDLEY: ~~There is one ~~man~~~~ <sup>yes</sup> I shall always remember, Major General Chung Yi. He was a commander of the 173rd division of the 11th ~~Group~~ <sup>Group</sup> Army. At our first meeting we sat down at a table with a candle between us and I felt as if I had known him always. He was quite young. I learned later that he was 39. His face was pleasant rather than handsome and when he spoke his deep voice was musical with the faintest touch of wistfulness in it. On this evening he said something that others had said often, but when he said it, it seemed to spring from all that gave his life meaning. "We have our faith," he said, "victory will not be easy but we will fight until victorious. We have our faith--tell your countrymen."

*i.e. of alling war neutral to Japan*  
~~He asked me many penetrating questions about American policy <sup>toward Japan</sup> ~~He introduced me~~ ~~to General Chung who~~ ~~in his statements about America.~~~~

He said he could not possibly understand why America should behave so foolishly. (you understand, of course, that this was before Pearl Harbor). The only answer he could find was that America hoped both China and Japan would be so weakened by the war that they could more easily be exploited afterwards. When I had to leave General Chung Yi's forces, I asked him to let me know when he was ordered to the front so that I might return and write about ~~the~~ <sup>his division in battle</sup> He said, "I will welcome you" and put into my hand a small jade ring. "This was given me by people who came to the front," he said, "It is a symbol of hope and faith." I wanted to go back to General Chung's division but malaria is a merciless affliction and I could do little between relapses. Then <sup>as I lay ill,</sup> one day a soldier came to me and said that Chung-Yi's division had been annihilated and that General Chung was either dead or captured. I listened to the story as in a dream. The Japanese had come with planes, tanks, and motor trucks. After fierce fighting in which Chung Yi's

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SMEDLEY (CONT): division tried to cover a Chinese retreat, Chung Yi <sup>general</sup> had escaped into the fields. <sup>by the enemy</sup> At last to prevent capture he had turned his pistol against himself.

MCCAFFERY: I'm glad to hear that the Japanese have no monopoly on that kind of courage.

SMEDLEY: Chung Yi's body was finally brought to Chung King for ~~state~~ <sup>burial</sup>. Soldiers marched to muffled drums and Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek conferred honors upon the dead. On the night of the funeral <sup>in my imagination,</sup> I lived through the battles in which Chung Yi had died, and I <sup>seemed to see him</sup> ~~saw~~ Chung Yi turn his pistol against his own heart. The vision seemed like a vision of all China, of the whole world. <sup>I almost to hear his</sup> ~~I heard Chung Yi's~~ voice murmuring across a great distance, "We have our faith -- tell your countrymen."

MCCAFFERY: Miss Smedley, you've given us an inspiring picture of China's fight against fascism. The fact that we are now allies in that fight may have ended the doubts about us expressed by General Chung Yi. Do you think there is anything else we can do to prove that we are wholeheartedly behind China's fight?

SMEDLEY: Perhaps the best thing I can say to that is that simple peasants and soldiers in China could not understand why we waited so long. They said, "In America you can all read and write, you understand what is happening in the world. Why then do <sup>Japaned</sup> ~~American~~ planes drop <sup>American</sup> ~~Japanese~~ bombs on us?" To that I could only say that <sup>I hoped</sup> things would change, that America would wake up. By giving China every ounce of assistance we can drive Japan from her soil. <sup>after</sup> the victory there will be no more distrust.

MCCAFFERY: Thank you Miss Smedley for your courageous representation of ~~the~~ America in China's front lines. I'm sure that the Chinese will not forget your humanity and sincerity. BATTLE HYMN OF CHINA is a great contribution to our understanding of our Chinese allies.

ANNOUNCER: You have just heard fighting words presented by Wmca in cooperation with the Council on Books in Wartime. Mr. John K.M. McCaffery has interviewed Agnes Smedley, author of BATTLE HYMN OF CHINA. Next week Mr. McCaffery's guest will be Roy Ottley, author of NEW WORLD A COMING.