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by Miss Agnes Smedley" - Hong Kong Daily Press, November 12, 1940.

POLITICAL TRAINING IN THE CHINESE ARMIES

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Interesting Lecture By
Miss Agnes Smedley

TO THE SIMPLE PEASANT SOLDIER OF ANHUI AND TO HIS BRETHREN SCATTERED THROUGHOUT THE INVADIED PROVINCES OF CHINA with the guerilla armies, the war with the aggressor has opened the floodgate of a new world of ideas.

Where men and women lived in poverty and ignorance with no other end in mind but to till the soil for a meagre existence, a social revolution has swept away the old cobweb of fixed beliefs and prejudices so that to-day, even in those parts of China where the influence of the Manchu dynasty has not yet died altogether, the new firmly replaces the old.

The Chinese guerilla soldier is no longer a man without education but one who has been granted every facility to learn to read and write, to acquire some knowledge of the world and of the natural sciences, of the size and resources of his country and of its position among the nations of the world.

So said Miss Agnes Smedley, foreign correspondent, author, and friend of China, in a lecture on "Political Training in the Chinese Armies" given on Tuesday night to a meeting of the Hongkong University Arts' Association in the Union Assembly Room, University Union building.

Miss Smedley, who in the past three years has travelled with the Chinese guerilla armies on many fronts, and principally in Central and West Anhui and South Hupeh, told the story of an Army that was built up on an appeal to national and social conscience and that considers political training as necessary and integral to making good soldiers as military training.

QUITE VAGUE

In conversations with common soldiers in barracks, training camps and military hospitals, she had spoken with men who were yet quite vague as to why they were fighting, Miss Smedley said, but the others, a great majority, were not unconscious to the magnitude of the task that lay before them and were confident of their own ability to hold out to the end.

Where the more simple soldiers knew only that they were to push the invader into the sea and end the war there, other men, both from among those recruited from the villagers and others who had experienced metropolitan life, knew what they were up against and had carefully evaluated both the abilities and the faults of the enemy and of their own Army.

Officers she had met were conscious of the fact that despite their lack of success in guerilla and mobile warfare, the Japanese through the past two years have considerably improved on their tactics. They knew too that the military training undergone by the Japanese troops was vastly superior to that of their own soldiers, and they were aware of the fact that the Japanese soldiery could show remarkable ability in adapting themselves to new situations.

revered, and there is now an annual Florence Nightingale day with the guerilla troops.

A campaign to teach every man a minimum of 500 characters has also brought desirable results and illiteracy among the soldiers has now fallen to the extent that they are among the principal contributors to the various army periodicals.

NOT CONSCRIPTION

The guerilla army is an army of volunteers, not a man being conscripted, and batches of officers and men were being sent back in rotation to training centres where they went through courses of training lasting six months both in military and political matters.

These training centres have also an Enemy Work Department where Chinese students returned from Japan teach the soldiers to shout out in Japanese such slogans as "Brethren, lay down your arms!" while in battle. Japanese captives soon found that they were being permitted, as guests of the guerilla armies, such freedom of speech and opportunity for independent study as had never been theirs before. They wore the regular uniforms of the Army and were permitted to wander about at will.

To the Chinese student in Hongkong, Miss Smedley gave the following advice, that he would do well to learn more of his own country, and to go into it and see it and the men who were helping to build up its future, that he would do well to have a great respect for the little people of his country, and that he should acquire all the military training and technical knowledge he could, and should strive to contribute monthly in money to help China.

VERY LOW EBB

But on the other hand, the Chinese troops were becoming aware of the fact that the morale of the Japanese soldier had fallen to a very low ebb, that the men they met in battle were boys of 16 and 17 or men of 34 and 35, that the marksmanship of the Japanese army had declined to a considerable extent, and that the Japanese were finding protracted warfare not to their taste.

Political training had resulted in cultural developments, Miss Smedley said, and in learning to care for the wounded the soldier acquired also an attitude of sympathy and compassion for his fellow that is new to him. Florence Nightingale is one of the heroines the guerilla soldier had learned to