

VI - 73 C - 10. Smedley, Agnes "Agnes Smedley's Open Letter to
Henry B. Luce - Challenging "Time-Life" Articles on
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Challenges



Henry Luce on China

Agnes Smedley's Open Letter to Henry R. Luce

Challenging 'Time-Life' Articles on China Situation

Last week, Life magazine asked Agnes Smedley, author and lecturer on China, to submit from her large collection of photographs some that would serve to illustrate a forthcoming Life article on the Chinese Communists. She tried to find out from the magazine what the article would be like—whether, as she subsequently wrote, it would be “based upon fact instead of upon the fabricated dope which the Chinese secret political police in Chungking and New York are putting out.” She reports that she could learn nothing of the nature of the article, and she thereupon decided not to send the photographs.

Miss Smedley submitted the reasons for her decision in an open letter to Henry R. Luce, editor-in-chief of Time Inc., publisher of Life, and after she had tried and failed to elicit a promise from Life that it would publish it, sent a copy to PM. Subsequently Life informed PM that it planned to answer Miss Smedley directly, but did not propose to make a “public issue” of the exchange of correspondence by printing either her letter or its reply.

The Life spokesman added that the magazine was planning, in its Dec. 18 issue, to print a piece on Communist China by Theodore White which—the spokesman said—could be considered a very factual piece that puts Red China in a quite favorable light.”

At this juncture, PM naturally decided to leave Miss Smedley the decision as to whether or not she still wanted her letter to Mr. Luce published in this newspaper. This was her answer: “Had Life informed me of all the facts concerning the proposed article, I would have sent them the pictures. In any case, the fact that the magazine may, in the near future, publish a fair article on Chinese Communists does not excuse Mr. Luce for having published an unfair one a month ago. I think my letter stands on its own feet as throwing light on a vital problem. I should like to see it published.”

PM agrees that the letter is newsworthy and publishes it in that spirit. Following is an abbreviated version—together with some of the photographs which Miss Smedley refused to send to Life.



“Leaders of women's organizations in guerilla territory. Their job is to organize and educate civilian women.”

Photos and captions by Agnes Smedley

Mr. HENRY R. LUCE,
Editor-in-chief, Time Inc., (Publisher of Life, Time and Fortune).

On May 1 you published a true and courageous article on China by Theodore White, after which Dr. Sun Fo, president of the Legislative Yuan of the Chinese Government, wired you that the report was factually true and that Chinese liberals do not object to friendly American criticism. Since then I sometimes thought of sending you letters from Chinese friends in China and the United States, saying that American democrats are playing a great historical role in the defense of Chinese democratic forces. China, these letters often state, will never forget this, and will be forever grateful to us.

‘Kuomintang Line’

After May, however, many high Chinese officials and Kuomintang agents came to this country and began a campaign against American friends of Chinese democracy. They began to feed a regular “Kuomintang line” of propaganda to American reactionaries who have been willing to “front” for them. This

activity has been accompanied by secret efforts to have Americans in many institutions of the country, discharged, because they have criticized Kuomintang reaction.

This “Kuomintang Party line” has charged that Americans have been interfering in Chinese affairs by trying to force the Chungking government to lift the blockade against the Chinese Communist-led 8th Route and New 4th Armies and to “turn the Chinese Government over to the Communists.” Your *Time* article of the 13th echoed this “line.” The material for it was furnished by Mrs. Y. Y. Sung, the Chinese woman on your staff who has not been in China for many years. One of your American editors tidied this material into your *Time* article, while you came along in your *Life* editorial demanding that we put no strings on war material furnished to the Kuomintang government.

The Chinese upon whom you have depended for your information—if such it may be called—talk of our “interference in Chinese affairs,” though by supporting—as we have since 1927—the Kuomintang dictatorship we have interfered in

Chinese affairs to the never-ending detriment of the Chinese people.

Your Chinese informers do not really object to American interference in Chinese affairs. They welcome interference that keeps them in power, and they see nothing wrong with American war materials, made by the labor of American workers, being diverted to a potential civil war against the Chinese Communist-led armies. They, like your publications, use the name of “China,” though the elements who pretend to represent “China”—according to Dr. Sun Fo—represent less than 1 per cent of the Chinese people, and constituted a “dictatorship and a tyranny” that had forgotten the very meaning and methods of democracy.

Distortion

In your Nov. 13 *Time* article, you distorted even the facts that led to Gen. Joseph Stilwell's recall. For instance:

“Gen. Stilwell had long believed that China's war effort would be mightily reinforced by bringing the Chinese Communist armies into the war against Japan . . .”

Here the American people are

fed the “Kuomintang line,” implying that the Chinese Communist armies have not been, and are not, fighting the Japanese. Your publications, however, needed only to read the monitored Japanese radio dispatches for years, which boast year on end of constant fighting in which the Communist armies have been “annihilated.” How the Japanese stand toward the Communists is clearly expressed by the quivering flag of the puppet Nanking government, across which these words are written: “Chinese People's Anti-Communist Government.”

Take this sentence from your *Time* article:

“Their [the Communist] infiltration of these areas [North China] has been achieved by driving out not Japs, but Chungking's guerillas and entire administration.”

Not only I, Mr. Luce, but many

other Americans have seen the 8th Route Army in action. Within the first three or four months of the war, the Japanese had cleared most of North China of Chinese Nationalist Armies, and of administrators which fled with the armies—or remained to work as Japanese puppets.

It was under the command of Gen. Wei Li-hwang, commander of the Shansi front, that the first three divisions of the 8th Route Army infiltrated into Japanese-occupied territory and began to recapture it from the enemy. To take the place of old officials, whose administration had been notoriously corrupt, the Communist-led armies organized and armed the people, introduced universal suffrage, the secret ballot, and held people's elections in which men—and women—ran for office regardless of party or

MORE →



“I spoke at this mass meeting during an election campaign in a Communist-protected area. It was at a series of such meetings that the people decided to give suffrage to all men and women over 18.”



“These nurses, shown examining guerilla troops, came originally from Nanking. The post is somewhere along the Tientsin-Nanking railroad. I crossed the Yangtse River with these women.”

class. Women were liberated and given suffrage rights. The Chungking government later tried to send back its own old appointed officials, but the people rejected them.

Many foreigners have seen this development, among them Col. Evans F. Carlson, of the Marines, and G. Martell Hall, former director of the National City Bank of Peiping, who escaped to the 8th Route Army and lived with them for eight months. In fact, one week before the *Time* article appeared, an American of authority, returned from the 8th Route Army, talked with you for an hour and gave you first-hand impressions of our correspondents, military experts, and aviators. Despite this material, you allowed that *Time* article to appear.

Your article also stated that "Chungking's military intelligence" has captured many Communist High Command directives, one being a plan to capture north Kiangsu Province which, you stated, is a "Chungking area."

Now, the Japanese captured Hsuehchow, strategic center of north Kiangsu in June, 1938, and established their power in strategic cities and along all lines of communication. I was with the New 4th Army, which operated along the lower reaches of the Yangtze, in eastern Anhwei and north Kiangsu Provinces, for eight months. There was one small division of government troops in north Kiangsu, commanded by Gen. Li Chang-kiang.

Worked With Japs

This general was able to exist because he cooperated with the Japanese via the puppet troops of Wang Ching-wei, the Chinese quisling in Nanking. Together with the Japanese and the puppets, he fought the New 4th Army. But in early 1940, this general went over to the Japanese, hook, line and sinker.

When American correspondents asked about this in Chungking, a government spokesman dared reply that Gen. Li acted from "patriotic motives," and would later return to the fold. He has not done so. Some 30 other government officers followed his "patriotic" example.

Another paragraph in your *Time* article stated:

"Stripped to the bare facts, that situation was that Chungking, a dictatorship ruling high-handedly in order to safeguard the last vestige of democratic principles in China, was engaged in an undeclared civil war with Yen-an, a dictatorship whose pur-

pose was the spread of totalitarian Communism in China."

This is a new wrinkle in Kuomintang propaganda. Americans who have been with the Communist-led armies know the facts which you try to deny. In his book, *China Looks Forward*, Dr. Sun Fo exposed the totalitarian regime of the Kuomintang as an imitation of fascism, operating with secret political police systems, and founded on feudal landlord tyranny and corruption.

More recently, Dr. Sun spoke in Chungking, declaring that "certain people" in China not only regard democracy as a "new-fangled idea," but are "afraid of it." These "certain people" included the party boss, Chen Li-fu; Gen. Ho Ying-ching, the chief-of-staff, and, whether you wish to recognize it or not, Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek. Their fear of democracy accounts for their blockade of the Communist-led armies.

Your *Time* article quoted alleged articles, written by one alleged Wang Shih-wei, and published in the *Emancipation Daily* of Yen-an, which, your article stated, were "smuggled" out of Yen-an.

Don't Claim Perfection

The *Emancipation Daily* is published in thousands of copies and circulated over all North China. Communists themselves smuggle it down into Chungking and into the United States. I have copies of this newspaper, but have never happened to see these articles.

However, for the past three years, the *Emancipation Daily* has carried on a campaign against "bureaucracy, dogmatism and sectarianism" within the ranks of the Communist Party and of the North China administration. The Communists of China have never claimed infallibility. Instead, they expose weaknesses and faults and try to eradicate them.

Any statement that the Chinese Communists "ignore the people's welfare" and neglect the sick "who cannot obtain a mouthful of soup," is a deliberate lie. I worked with the medical services of both the 8th Route and New 4th Armies and despite their inadequate medical supplies and personnel, they were superior to any Nationalist army's.

The sick and wounded were given every possible care and received three meals a day, and even special diets. They were the only armies that even knew what special diets were. Their medical services were also at the disposal of the civilian population, totally without charge.



"Here's first democratic election in guerilla territory. The people were given ballot papers—red bits for 'yes' and green bits for 'no.' Names of candidates were read aloud and then a basket was held up to receive the votes."

In the one year, 1939, alone two rear hospitals of the New 4th Army where I worked, cared for 30,000 civilians, apart from the Army sick and wounded.

Child's Decision

True, there were places and times, and still are, when these armies never had enough to eat. They had only two meals a day, at 10 and at four—but this was the universal practice of all the Nationalist armies also. In the Communist armies, officers and men shared the same food. True, they needed better and more, but couldn't get it. But it was bad taste, to say the least, to complain. Their extensive educational work, the best of all armies of China, taught the soldiers the nature of the war, the reasons and necessity for it, and also the state of the world. Unlike our own troops when the war began, they knew the methods and ideology of Fascism.

I once tried to adopt a thin little war-orphan from the New 4th Army, offered to send him to a school near Chungking and later bring him with me to America where he could eat all he needed. The child milled over this for one whole night, and I suspect a little dog of personal interest, its tongue hanging out, tormented him. Finally he refused, saying I could adopt him "after the final victory" because "now all men are needed at the front."

The voices of such children, and of a half a million men, fill my studio now. I've attended their dying and helped bury their dead.

They died as they had lived and fought—without fear or regret. They, together with a few of the most advanced Nationalist armies, alone, knew fully the meaning of this war and the role which they were called upon to play in Chinese and world history. From the first day of the war until the present, they declared that they were fighting not only for Chinese, but for world democracy. Their conception of democracy is broader than the interpretation given it by the moneyed interests of their own country or ours. They thought in terms of the entire Chinese people rather than of a tiny minority of the rich and privileged.

Partly Responsible

Can you, able to read our own Declaration of Independence and our Bill of Rights, claim that they are wrong?

The regime which *Time*, *Life* and *Fortune* have chosen to champion, is crumbling. Not until the Japanese were actually knocking on its front door has this regime been willing to yield a step to the Chinese democratic forces—which include the Communists. It scorned even the democrats within its own ranks. It sent its agents to the United States to lie to and deceive the American public, and you opened your publications to them.

That America is in part responsible for the whole Chinese debacle goes without saying. Americans who for years wrote the truth about China were defamed as Reds, idealists, visionaries and what not. I am one of those called "partisans"

because I would not sit on the fence and pretend that Fate could protect us.

It would have fallen, had our moneyed interests not supported it in power.

Now the cry goes up that the Chinese Communists will dominate all China and fight the war, while American influence will wane. Let us thank God that some Chinese force remains intact to fight on, in cooperation with us. American democrats will thank God that this new China, rising in the ashes of the old, will not sell their country to American and British industrialists and financiers.

Within the ranks of the Chinese Nationalist armies are hundreds of thousands of honest and democratic patriots. It is they who must pay for the sins of the Kuomintang regime, and those who escape death in this debacle will find ways of uniting with other men like themselves, including the Communist armies, to continue the war and to build a democratic government.

That government will not be "totalitarian Communism" as your *Time* article stated, for that is not and never has been the program or purpose of the Chinese Communists. If we try to destroy this government in order that China may become a puppet state as Greece and Italy are British puppets, we may cause decades of suffering and bloodshed, but we will merely end by becoming the most hated of imperialisms.

Very truly yours,
AGNES SMEDLEY



"Communist guerillas of New 4th Army return from battle with the Japanese, carrying captured rifles. Note civilian in foreground and peasant carrying rifles. Guns will be used against the Japanese."



"Railway workers on Peking-Hankow line turn steel rail into big swords for the guerillas and Communist troops. Steel was taken from tracks bombed by Japanese; girders were also transformed into swords."

WEEK OF WAR: British Kill Greeks in Name of Law and Order... Yanks Counter Jap Strategy... Soviets Prepare Drive on Austria...

POLITICS

Moral Defeat For Churchill

In Athens, British tanks and fighter-bombers killed Greeks in the name of law and order. In London, Winston Churchill cracked the bull-whip over Parliament and got himself a vote of confidence of 281 to 32. It was a terrific moral victory for the opposition.

Churchill received just one more vote than Neville Chamberlin did in May 1940 (Chamberlin got 280 to 200) in the debate that forced him out of office. Churchill's previous confidence vote was 425 to 23. The Labor Party rank and file, unwilling to upset the wartime government, merely abstained from voting. The Labor Party Cabinet ministers and their Parliamentary private secretaries, however, voted for Churchill.

Churchill obtained the following vote:

Conservative 229, Labor 23, Liberal National 10, Liberal 10, Independent 9.

Opposed were: Labor 24, Independent Labor 2, Common Wealth 2, Communist 1, Independent 3.

Thirty-three labor party men, of the government coalition, abstained from voting.

Other Non-Voters

The vote also showed that about 133 Conservatives did not vote, either because they were absent or because they did not care to support the Government. About 10 Liberal Nationals, also part of the Government coalition, and about 13 Liberals likewise did not vote.

Nonetheless, the vote, as Churchill made clear, means that the British troops will continue to fight the troops of the Greek National Liberation Front (EAM) until the Athens region is cleared and Premier George Papandreou's power ensured.

The civil war in Greece had its roots in many things—the hatred of the people for the Metaxas dictatorship imposed before the war; the sufferings of the German occupation; the hatred of the EAM and its troops (the ELAS) for collaborators and royalists, and, more recently, in the Papandreou Government's insistence on disarming ELAS while letting the so-called Mountain Brigade keep its weapons.

How It Began

It began with a demonstration last Sunday in the main square of Athens against Papandreou's re-

gime. The demonstrators—all correspondents in Athens agreed—were unarmed. They included women and children. The parade had been permitted, then banned. As the crowd gathered in Constitution Square, the Greek police opened fire with machine guns and rifles. At least 23 persons were killed.

The EAM (a coalition of left-wing groups) declared a general strike. Maj. Gen. Ronald Scobie, British commander in Greece, ordered all ELAS forces out of the Athens area. The British troops went into action to disarm them. Fighting alongside the British were Papandreou's Mountain Brigade and police.

Friday a general strike was declared in Salonika, through which relief supplies had been entering Greece.

Prisoners of War

The ELAS forces announced they were treating British and Papandreou troops as prisoners of war. Guthrie Janssen of NBC, who interviewed the commander of Papandreou's Mountain Brigade, was having a hard job keeping his men from killing ELAS prisoners. Other correspondents saw Papandreou troops and police beating prisoners.

Friday night there were reports from Athens that the ELAS forces had made contact with a Papandreou representative to seek conditions for ending the civil war.

The U. S. attitude toward developments in Europe, expressed in a statement by Secretary of State Stettinius, was like a slap in the face to the British. Churchill in his speech showed his irritation. Stettinius, in effect, rebuked Britain for her blackballing of Count Carlo Sforza as a member of the Italian cabinet and actions in Greece, reaffirming American adherence to the principle of non-interference with liberated countries in choosing their governments.

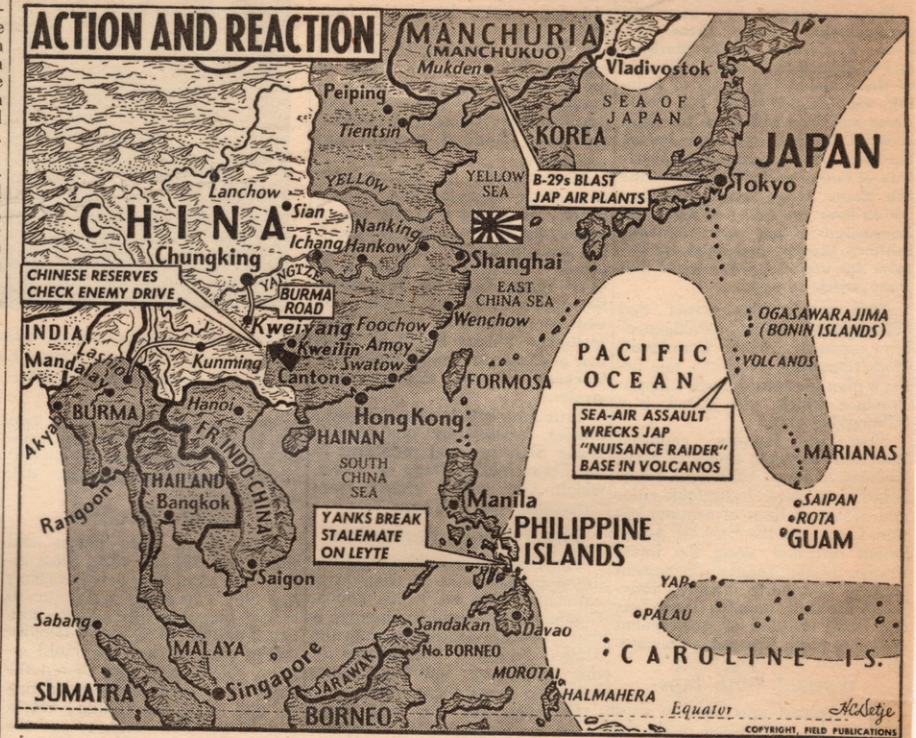
No Consultation

Britain, in announcing that Sforza was unacceptable, acted without consulting the U. S. A. While Churchill was speaking in Commons, Lord Halifax, British Ambassador to the U. S. A., called on Stettinius. He came out of the talk to tell reporters:

"The moral is that there should be full consultation on all sides at all times."

Churchill said that the British Government didn't want Sforza as Italian Foreign Minister because Sforza had broken his promise to support the Badoglio government.

But William S. Gailmor, over



PM, Dec. 10, 1944

WJZ Friday night, told another side of the story. Gailmor said the Italian cabinet crisis was precipitated simply by Sforza's determination to do a thorough job as head of the commission purging the Italian administrations of fascists. Gailmor said things blew up when Premier Bonomi asked the cabinet to call Sforza off as he was about "to go to town on the Army and Navy."

Fascists Preserved

The head of the Italian Navy, Adm. de Courten, refused to let any fascist in the navy to be touched, Gailmor added.

At a meeting in the home of Marshal Badoglio on Oct. 24, attended by de Courten, the head of the Italian police, and former Premier Vittorio Orlando, it was planned to form a new Badoglio government based on Italian military power and supported almost exclusively by rightest elements, Gailmor continued. But the story of the meeting leaked out and it was decided to postpone the job for a while. Sforza's anti-fascist purge was the last straw.

Rome dispatches said Bonomi was succeeding in forming a new cabinet, without the support of the anti-monarchist Action Party or the Socialists.

The situation in Belgium cooled off during the week, with Premier Hubert Pierlot firmly in the saddle under the protection of British troops.

PACIFIC

Ormoc Landings Speed Cleanup

The war against Japan took a peculiar turn this week with the Allies reacting sharply to the enemy's counter-offensive measures. Neither the Yank landing south

of Ormoc nor the joint sea-air assault on Two Jima in the Volcanos apparently was on the original operations schedule. Both moves were the result of Japanese counter strategy.

In a determined effort to break the long stalemate on the Leyte front, MacArthur sent an amphibious force around to the west side of the island and effected a successful surprise landing three miles south of the main enemy base through which the Japanese have been funneling reinforcements to their advanced positions.

Hazardous

It was a bold operation and full of hazards. Before the 100-ship convoy could set down its cargo of men and material it had to sail through inland waterways under the noses of the Japanese air force.

The enemy did not spot the task force until the landing was well underway. Air opposition was negligible.

But as the convoy re-formed for the return trip four hours later, enemy fighters started a determined air attack that lasted nine hours. Lightning escorts brought down 40 enemy planes. Our ack-ack accounted for 22 others. The Japanese succeeded in damaging one of our destroyers and a small freighter which was subsequently sunk by shell-fire.

The landing south of Ormoc should shorten the battle for Leyte considerably. The Japanese will be forced to give up their strong mountain positions to meet the threat at their rear. Capture of Ormoc would leave only a comparatively small port to the north open for reinforcements but communications to that point are poor.

The combined B-29, Liberator and naval attack on Iwo Jima was brought on by the Japanese air threat to our Superfort bases at Saipan.

The planes gave Iwo Jima one

of the worst pastings of the Pacific war. Our warships appeared off the coast shortly after and sent salvo after salvo into Japanese shore installations. Frontline dispatches indicated that the enemy base will be useless for some time to come.

In China, the Japanese threat to Kweiyang and Chungking has forced Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek to partially lift the blockade against the Communists and to send some of his crack troops to battle the invaders. Reinforcements succeeded in checking the Nipponese drive in Kweichow Province and recapturing Tushan and Pachi, strategic points only 75 miles from the important Burma Road junction at Kweiyang.

EUROPE: EAST

Germans Buckle In So. Hungary

German defenses across central and southern Hungary buckled this week under a series of powerful Red Army hammer blows which promised to outflank Budapest and put Soviet forces in position to open the battle for Austria.

All along a 200-mile front stretching from northeast Hungary to a point close to the Austrian border, the Germans fell back under the assault of more than a million Soviet troops and the Red Army air force which was carrying out a night-and-day offensive in support of the ground forces.

The enemy rushed reinforcements from Italy and the west in a vain attempt to prop up crumbling defenses which a United Press dispatch from Moscow said "seemed on the verge of collapse." Latest reports indicate that the 40,000 Nazi reserves were being cut to pieces by the Soviet spearheads.

As Malinovsky's 2d Ukrainian Army converged on Budapest from

THE FOUR GREEK ORDERS

