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Miss Smedley Draws Stark Picture of China's Struggle

"Tell your countrymen that the Chinese will fight to the death, to the last drop of our blood," was the message Agnes Smedley, author of Battle Hymn of China, brought from the soldiers of China to her audience in Skidmore College Hall.

Miss Smedley drew a stark picture of the terrific odds against which the Chinese fight and attributed their ability to withstand the Japanese to their fundamental belief that they are fighting for a "democratic, progressive China" and for freedom for all oppressed people.

"I think I know the heart of China," Miss Smedley declared. "They are a people who have awakened nationally and are internationally conscious, too. And don't forget they are a colored race which has suffered from the imperialism of the white man and they are determined to free themselves from all outside domination—from Japan or elsewhere."

Miss Smedley related with vivid detail the story of her own experiences as a Chinese Red Cross worker with both the Communist 8th Route Army, and with the 173rd Division of the Regular Army.

Miss Smedley told of discussions with the Chinese generals and soldiers "where," she said, "I have never heard such penetrating, soul-searching discussion. They are hard fighting men but at the same time visionaries and idealists. They search the skies to find out what is worth fighting and dying for. And it is not dollars and cents nor yet power or position. They fight for a country where the men who grow rice shall have rice to eat, where the men who weave cloth shall have clothes to wear, where there shall be no rich and poor but equality of opportunity for all."

Many of the thoughtful Chinese, according to Miss Smedley, find it difficult to understand why the United States sold scrap iron and ammunition to the Japanese for such a long time before Pearl Harbor and they are fearful that the British, Dutch and French may not really want a victorious China lest it may lead to a loss of their possessions in the East.

A large proportion of the audience remained after the regular lecture for a question period. In her replies to specific questions Miss Smedley explained that there are dangerous pro-fascist cliques in China, extremely nationalistic and anti-foreign, and that throughout the East, Japan has made great political capital of her story that she will free the oriental people from subjection to the western powers. Miss Smedley believes that our country has been blind to this danger, and has often supported the most conservative groups in China when we should do everything possible to strengthen the young progressive liberals.

John A. Slade, vicepresident of Yaddo, introduced Miss Smedley as the first of the Yaddo lecturers, a series of distinguished speakers which the Corporation of Yaddo plans to make available to the college and community.

President Moore presided at the meeting and expressed the gratitude of Skidmore and the community to the Corporation of Yaddo for the opportunity to hear Miss Smedley, and for the many other outstanding persons in art, music and literature which Yaddo brings to our city and introduces to the college and the residents of Saratoga.