

VI - 73 E - 12. Agnes Smedley -- Battle Hymn of China, Seattle Times,
Editorial Page, September 5, 1943.

VI E 73 -12
The Literary Guidepost

"BATTLE HYMN OF CHINA" by

Agnes Smedley (Knopf, \$2.50).

UP to this moment, Agnes Smedley's "Battle Hymn of China"

is the finest job of reporting China to the world I have read.

The book is very long, and the amount and variety of the material it contains is almost bewildering. But

this is no disadvantage when the trend of the whole is easily grasped.

Miss Smedley's book is unified and often ennobled by the fact that through all its course, the author sees China and her struggle through the eyes of the underdog.

Possibly she comes as close to understanding the tangle of Chinese politics as any Occidental; she not only lived in China for 12 years of her recent career, but she also has fought for China.

* * *

FOUR years were spent with the national and guerrilla armies at the front. She has done everything from attending banquets to burying the dead, and although she spent much time with the generals, she spent much more with the troops themselves.

She froze with them, caught their plentiful diseases, tried to teach and to cure.

Her story is no Vincent Sheean Wagon-Lit journey from one notable to another. Miss Smedley's trips were made on foot, slogging down the rutty roads of China through Japanese-held country where a lighted cigarette might, and often did, mean death.

* * *

FOR me the most important thing "Battle Hymn of China" brought was some understanding of the tortuous course of Chiang Kai-shek.

Now he is the symbol of Chinese resistance to the western world, but when Miss Smedley first knew him, he was in China the symbol of reaction and not above ordering the national army, so-called, to fire upon Chinese "Communist" armies and hold their fire against the Japs.

The picture was very complicated only a few years back, and Miss Smedley clarifies it remarkably well.

* * *

BY a strange adjustment, the thousands of Chinese executed as "communists" whether they were communists or not have been justified.

The Chinese armies descended from the old so-called "red" troops are proving, Miss Smedley writes, the bulwark of the Chinese nation. This is a book that shows the real China under a very bright light.

Editorial pa