

VI - 73 E - 16. Agnes Smedley - Battle Hymn of China - News Week,
September 6, 1943.

Red China

For years Chinese political gossip had been enlivened with the legend of Agnes Smedley. There was her habit of suggesting that she and her friends get out of their rickshas and pull their coolies for a change; her notoriously sharp tongue (to a consular official investigating her citizenship status because of her relations with an Indian she said: "You may call me a concubine if you will, but not a British subject"); and a hospital attendant's description of her as an "impossible looking woman dressed in a boiler suit."

Finally a correspondent traveled two days over a hazardous mountain road in Northwest China to the Communist capital of Yen-an to see her for himself. He saw a middle-aged American woman, a former schoolteacher, but one who had discarded dresses for an ill-fitting army uniform, who wore her brown hair cut like a man's. The only foreigner in the lonely walled town, she lived for a time in a cave, slept on a mud-brick bed, and wrote by candlelight far into the night the story of the Chinese Communist party.

"Battle Hymn of China" is this story. It is also a vivid glimpse of Agnes Smedley. Brought up in a Colorado mining camp with a mother who worked as a washwoman and a father who "drank to forget his hopes," she developed a sympathy for subjected people. In 1918 she was imprisoned for six months in the Tombs in New York City for her efforts to free India, and in 1929, after being sent to China as a correspondent for the *Frankfurter Zeitung* (then a liberal German paper), she plunged up to her neck in the cause of the Chinese workers.

The first part of her very interesting

book is concerned mostly with the ups and downs of the Communist party in China, and there is an appalling description of the poverty, violence, and confusion against and under which the Communist worked. Later when China was officially at war with Japan Miss Smedley followed the army for 22 months as a field member for the Chinese Red Cross. Here again the battle "hymn" is really a dirge of defeat, uncared-for wounded, and foreign callousness. Against the latter she writes with particular venom, flaying especially the British and her own countrymen. For example, she remarks that in 1937 while the Japanese were dropping bombs made of American metal, the only contribution from the United States that she saw on the Chinese side was an empty Standard Oil tin. Altogether it's a successful book, tremendous in scope. (BATTLE HYMN OF CHINA. By Agnes Smedley. 528 pages. Knopf. \$3.50.)

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Why Innocent Are the People!

Instead, he says, if the Allied nations, out of fear of too extreme a revolution, allow the old social structure to stand in Germany, Pan-Germanism, which to Pol has been the root of all German evil for 50 years, will continue to warp the minds of Germans and they will make another, and perhaps successful, bid for world domination. Nor must men like Hermann Rauschning, or Otto Strasser, who are nothing but modified Nazis be allowed to set up a government under Allied auspices.

What must happen in Germany, according to this writer, is a purge of the nation carried out by the German people themselves. To this end, non-Nazi citizens of the Reich must be incited to revolt at the proper moment and to clear the ground for a new social and political order. The Junkers, who comprise around 15,000 families, must be "eliminated"; the judiciary and the army deloused of reactionary and Pan-Germanic elements. The schools and universities must be shaken up and, in the interests of socialized democracy, heavy industry must be nationalized.

Pol ridicules any idea of sending a force of school teachers into Germany to teach Hitler's people how to behave like human beings. That must come from inside Germany. (THE HIDDEN ENEMY. By Heinz Pol. 281 pages. Julian Messner. \$3.)

OTHER NEW BOOKS

BUT GENTLY DAY. By Robert Nathan. 161 pages. Knopf. \$2. Cpl. Henry Arkbester will just about break your heart. Not only