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COPY OF REVIEWS OF BATTLE HYMN OF CHINA

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Miss Agnes Smedley has written a record of adventure in such a matter-of-fact language that one tends sometimes to forget how extraordinary it is. The book is autobiographical, but Miss Smedley quickly passes over the early part of her life until she first reaches China in 1928. From that time on her own life is so closely linked with China that she could truly write on her return to the United States: "I had become a part of the vast struggle for China."

Miss Smedley's life in China falls into three parts: the struggle between the Kuomintang and the Communists, the Eighth Route Army, and the war in Central China. In the first stage she no doubt derived considerable protection from those extraterritorial rights which she so much scorned. The second stage, a tale of high adventure, has already been told in her earlier writings and is dealt with only briefly in this book. In the third she was with the armies on the Yangtze front, and was often far behind the enemy lines in the guerrilla lands south and north of the Yangtze.

The main purpose of Miss Smedley's work was the care of the wounded. She met in Hankow the founder of the Chinese Red Cross Medical Corps, Dr. Robert Lim, and from that time was able to coordinate her own work with his. Yet her work was very far from limited to the care of the wounded or to the obtaining of medical supplies. Wherever she went she was asked to address the troops on such matters as the attitude of other countries to China, the supply of munitions to Japan, and every aspect of international affairs. The supply of war materials to the Japanese was naturally a frequent, and embarrassing, subject for discussion. "The Japanese murderers were without a sword. America gave them the sword," said General Li Chung-jen, the victor of Taierhohwang. He once remarked, with understandable cynicism, "Now that the second world war has begun, American business men can sell war materials to Europe instead of Japan." Whatever they may have thought of her country, the Chinese fighting men were full of friendship and gratitude that a foreigner should be prepared to sacrifice safety and comfort in order to share their life of incredible hardship.

The standards of living of the new Fourth Army and the guerrilla forces behind the Japanese lines were very low. That of the armies at the front was little better. Miss Smedley suffered not only this but the physical exhaustion of long journeys in all weather and the mental weariness of constant exposure to danger. A characteristic passage reveals something of this:-

"A feeling of despair took hold of me. Malaria returned to sap my strength, and together with mal-

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In the struggle between the Government and the Communist armies Miss Smedley takes the side of the Communists, yet she admits the truth of a statement by a Government official that if the Communists were given more money they would not improve the conditions of their troops but merely recruit more, though this was against Government instructions. It is hard to reconcile this and other instances of independence with Chu Teh's statement: "We will persist in our efforts to maintain and strengthen national unity under the leadership of Generalissimo Chiang."

It has often been said that even in modern China, the Japanese hold only the towns and the lines of communication. This book reveals the actual position in wide areas on both sides of the Yangtze. It was in November, 1934, that Miss Smedley and a party of some twenty persons traveled on sampans down a tributary of the Yangtze to the Japanese base. The Chinese were in full retreat as part of a general campaign. The Chinese were in full retreat, but they were to a great extent isolated, and depend on their own resources, and were thus exposed to every kind of hardship. Their plain-clothes men, however, passed in and out of the Japanese garrison towns, observed their movements, and enabled the Chinese to take a regular toll of the Japanese and their supplies.

The Chinese did not attempt to minimize the power of the Japanese. Operations of rivers and roads held by the Japanese were only attempted at night and with the most careful preparation. Miss Smedley took part in a number of such forays, and the accounts she gives are eloquent of the strain under which they were carried out.

Miss Smedley pointedly proclaimed that she was not a Communist, yet she had two friends among her close friends. She has been called a Communist by those who believe in capitalism, and had a "Communist" or "Socialist" or "Bourgeois democrat" or just a "Socialist" by Communists. Her views are certainly very far from those of the Communists. She allows a young man to say of the United States, "To think of having to ask a rich man for the right to live," and does not correct him. Her book shows much of the Communist stock-in-trade. The servants of capitalism are described as having cold, cruel faces, and eyes as hard as those of a snake, while the faces of the Communist White Horse Army are alight with enthusiasm and interest.

F.T.O.