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Agnes Smedley, China's Friend, Will Lecture Here Friday Evening

Experiences in War-Torn China Is Topic Chosen By Red Cross Worker, Foreign Correspondent, and Author

This Friday night, Yaddo will present Miss Agnes Smedley in a lecture at College Hall at 7:30. Miss Smedley has fought in China for the last twelve years as a foreign correspondent, a Red Cross front line worker, and a confidante of generals. During these years she became known to the Chinese people as "China's Friend", and she had lectured to soldiers up and down the front lines to sustain their courage, reminding them of their allies in the democratic countries. Since the Japanese invasion began, she was at the front with regular armies, and spent two years with guerrilla armies at the rear of the Japanese army of occupation. Her efforts on behalf of the Chinese gained so much recognition that she was marked for assassination by the Japanese Secret Police, one of the six Americans to be so designated by the Japs.

Miss Smedley, now a guest at Yaddo, has written a powerful book, "Battle Hymn of China," in which she paints an unforgettable picture of wartorn Peking, of the terror that was rampant in Shanghai, and of the Koumintank kidnapping of Chiang Kai-Shek. During the last episode, she herself was almost killed in the disturbance that followed, and it was then that she had her first contact with the mass of the Red Army; most of the next five years of her life were devoted to sharing their experiences. Others of Miss Smedley's books include "Daughter of Earth", "Chinese Destinies", "China Fights Back", and "China's Red Army Marches".

She tells the thrilling story of her experiences, living under conditions that discouraged other writers. She fought side by side with the Chinese people for Chinese independence, democracy, and improvement in the social conditions.

Of Miss Smedley, Lewis Gannet says this: "She has seen things which no other American, man or woman, has seen—of such stuff, in all ages, martyrs have been made. Martyrs can never have been comfortable people to have around the house, but they have made history and literature." The New York Herald Tribune states the following: "Agnes Smedley is surely one of the remarkable women of our times. She makes no pretense of being an objective observer, calmly sitting on a fence and reporting with detachment. 'Of course,' she said, 'I am not impartial, and make no such pretense. Yet I do not lie, do not distort, do not misrepresent. I merely tell what I see with my own eyes and experience every day'"

Of her book, the New York Times had this to say: "The reader will find it hard not to thrill at this heroic picture of a people not merely in the abstract, but of individuals who suffer silently and cheerfully—risking everything to be free. Twenty-five years ago the heroic ages of the world seemed past. We had forgotten that heroic ages are such because they are the theatre of a struggle with the forces of darkness. Miss Smedley makes one see that for China this is such a period—horror, hatred, and hope intermingled, humanity at its worst and best."

The early part of the book is autobiographical, dealing with, in less detail, the material she set forth in "Daughter of the Earth", but they tell of the twelve years in which she devoted herself to aiding the underprivileged of China. During these twelve years she was almost a part of the Chinese Revolution which began in 1928. In the early years, she wanted China to fight Japan when China's leaders were still somewhat hesitant. She saw the danger, where they did not. Her book never pulls its punches, and there will probably be many who will be aghast at it. Miss Smedley presents the story of the real China, the China that one day will govern itself, the China that will one day be once more a great power. And it is of the Chinese people, with their hopes and fears, their hardships and their joys, that Agnes Smedley writes.