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# WHAT CHINA'S FIGHTERS ARE THINKING

By AGNES SMEDLEY

SINCE the Japanese invasion of China began, the entire Chinese people have learned more, thought more, and been moved to decisive action in ways that might otherwise have taken centuries. This is a gain that counterbalances the colossal losses of human life and the destruction of cities, towns, villages, and most of China's industry. Material losses are temporary, but China's gains stretch into the future.

When the war began, the Japanese boasted that they could conquer the country within three months with half a dozen divisions. They thought in terms of Mongol and Manchu conquests—for the Japanese military mind is just about in the stage of the Mongols in the twelfth century. One of the best pictures of a Japanese military mind was given by a Japanese military spokesman at a press conference in Peiping some time ago. When foreign correspondents reminded him that the Japanese wounded were pouring into Peiping—which showed that Chinese resistance continued—the gentleman said: "The Chinese are unscientific. If they knew scientific warfare, they would have realized long ago that they were defeated."

In many ways, the Japanese have been responsible for unleashing the great flood of racial and national unity, iron determination and international consciousness which characterizes China today. The basis for this was laid before the war, however—for China has not been an independent nation since the Opium Wars of 1839 and 1842. Since that time China has been exploited, but also pounded, with new ideas some of which were to its advantage—democracy, nationalism, socialism, science. Many intellectual trends can be traced to American and British democracy, others to the 1917 Russian Revolution and the influence of the Chinese Communists and their two armies. Many others, such as certain humanitarian ideas, personal reforms or modern medical practices, may be traced to foreign missionaries or to such institutions as the Rockefeller Foundation's Peking Union Medical College.

AGNES SMEDLEY should know as well as the soldiers themselves what China's fighters are thinking, for until just recently she was almost one of them, as an American correspondent who since the Sino-Japanese war began has been on the front line and even, for months on end, in the enemy rear. Miss Smedley is now engaged in writing a new book on China.

For example, though beginnings were being made before, the secure foundation for socialized medicine has been laid since the outbreak of war, by patriotic medical men who sprang from the Peking Union Medical College. These men today head the National Health Administration, the Chinese Red Cross Medical Corps and even the backward Army Medical Service of the Ministry of War. Things are not so ideal as this may sound, for many unsolved problems remain, stemming from political intrigue and political and personal interests, basic contradictions in Chinese administration and society, bureaucracy, corruption and the widespread lack of patriotism of the Chinese medical profession which keeps thousands of doctors in port cities or even in Japanese-occupied territory. However, it often seems that the medical men and women who remain in national service and retain their vision almost compensate for all the backwardness and weaknesses of others of their profession.

In similar manner, another great creative development changing the minds of men and the structure of society has been the Industrial Cooperatives. These have laid the basis for economic democracy not only in production, but in general educational trends. Millions of men and women have been educated in true democratic practices in them. So powerful is this movement, so broad are its implications for China's future, that a conflict has been raging about it for months. Fascist-minded officials representing powerful Fascist institutions have been trying to drive out all men of social vision in the Cooperatives, and replace them with men who obey the Fascist-minded clique. It is not at all unusual to hear officials declare: "The industrial coöperatives are all right as a war measure, but afterwards the workers will not want to return

to private-owned factories and work for wages." "Amen," replies every man and woman of decent outlook in China. Chinese workers and refugees, once realizing the meaning of democracy through the Industrial Coöperatives, do not want to return to the ghastly condition of pre-war Chinese factories.

The rise of Fascism in Europe brought like-minded organizations and methods to life in China and, since the war, Japanese propaganda about "anti-Communism" has found a powerful echo in the hearts of reactionaries; and at times the country has almost been split wide open by them. These elements try to harness all Chinese organizations and institutions to Fascist mentality. This is the meaning of the internal struggle within the Industrial Coöperatives, and of the secret intrigues against the director of the Chinese Red Cross Medical Corps and many of his co-workers, which went on for months. Developing Fascism in China is the reason that tons of medicine destined for the 18th Group Army (Communist) have lain in Sian for months, official permission being refused to its further transport. As Japan has violated every international law that exists, so do Chinese Fascists violate the Geneva Convention of the International Red Cross, recognized by all countries, about the passage of medical supplies for the sick and wounded of any army, friend or enemy.

In similar manner, Chinese Fascists have established concentration camps on the Hitler model in a number of places in "Free China," one of them with some 4,000 men and women not far from Sian. These men and women are chiefly young intellectuals who are imprisoned because of their ideas. None are criminals. Many are not Communists but since "democracy" is confused in the minds of officials with Communism, every person of democratic outlook is regarded with suspicion. Every one who fails to hail as eternal truth the slogan of "one country, one party, one leader" is regarded as a man in the "outer defense works of the Communists."

However disagreeable, a fact is a fact. And the outstanding *political* fact in China is that the ruling party, the Kuomintang, once a progressive, national-revolutionary party, has become an official party composed of conflicting conservative cliques. The practices of many such definitely impede the progress of the war and prevent the total mobilization of the people and of all natural resources for the war.

Within the past six months, there has been a general public demand for the abolition of one-party dictatorship in order to eliminate ideas of absolutism. Another outstanding fact is that the

only other powerful party besides the Kuomintang is the Communist Party, and sometimes it looks as if the entire national problem will eventually be settled by one or other of these parties. This is particularly true unless a real democratic government is introduced into China. Today, the program of the Chinese Communist Party, with its two powerful armies, fits the needs of the country and the common people like a glove. It is this that gives it great power, even with men and women by no means Communist. Its program boils down to the Magna Carta within the framework of the Three People's Principles of the late Sun Yat-sen—nationalism, democracy, improvement in the people's livelihood—the latter idea demanding reduction by twenty-five per cent in rent of landlords from peasants, and income and inheritance tax on the rich.

I have often been the guest of Kuomintang magistrates, who sent guides with me through certain danger zones. Often we entered half-destroyed, pillaged villages from which all people had fled when even one squad of Japanese soldiers had approached. Repeatedly I asked why the people were not organized and armed to defend their homes, but repeatedly I was told that, if this were done, the Communists might gain control of such organizations of armed men and "disturb the social order." Only the rich who profit by the present backward social order wish to see it preserved.

China today is permeated with new ideas, new terms, new movements, and with a passionate determination to achieve progressive ends. Unlike most industrialized countries, China finds its armies often the bearers of new ideas—at least in the war zones. Millions of soldiers (peasants) have fought over vast territories which, before the war, they did not even know were China. Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, in no respect a democrat, has repeatedly issued orders and statements that raised the status of the soldier from helot to hero. Such big organizations as the "Friends of the Wounded Soldiers" have given millions of civilians some sense of responsibility for the care of the wounded—a revolutionary development. Yet glaring contradictions remain, in feudal conditions within many armies and in such facts as the refusal of the government to conscript educated men, or even doctors, for the care of the army sick and wounded. Students, many of whom would gladly fight as soldiers if permitted, are not conscripted. The Minister of Education has at times stated that they are too precious to be sacrificed; or that too much money has been invested in them! Many people believe that conservatives in the

**Kumbum**, famous lamasery of Chinghai, boasts a gigantic auditorium in which thousands of lamas chant at the very bottom of their voices, amidst the burning incense and butter lamps



The gold roofs of Kumbum stand as shining proof of the riches, power and glory of this birthplace of Protestant Lamaism, or the "Yellow Sect"

The lamasery is called Kumbum by Tibetans, Ta-er-ssu by Chinese—for Chinghai, to which this bridge from Kansu leads, is a border province

Y. P. MEI





AGNES SMEDLEY

**CHINA'S SOLDIERS** are often the bearers of new ideas. In their leisure they practise writing, as at left, or carve bamboo characters for slogans urging national resistance

Before the war men became soldiers to earn their rice, but now they know why they fight and die. Many love to dream and talk of a democratic China, without either rich or poor



The "ballot basket" at this first democratic election of town and village leaders in a part of Central Hupeh contains the votes—red paper signifying "yes" and green, "no"

