

VI - 73 D - 49. "Study Club Starts Year With Annual Luncheon" -
Agnes Smedley - Speaker - New Paltz Independent and Times,
New Paltz, N.Y., September 30, 1943.

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STER COUNTY, N. Y., THURSDAY, SEPT. 30, 1943

Study Club Starts Year With Annual Luncheon, Oct. 5

At their annual luncheon on October 5, at 12:30 at the Methodist church, the Study Club will have the privilege of meeting and hearing one of the great women of today, Agnes Smedley, whose latest book, "The Battle Hymn of China," is being acclaimed by thinking men everywhere as one of the great books of the century.

Born of old pioneer stock in Missouri, educated in California and Colorado, she was fired early in her career by a passionate concern for the commonplace people everywhere. This burning desire to relieve suffering and banish ignorance has led her into an adventurous, dangerous and colorful life.

Her experience in China began when, as correspondent for the German newspaper, Frankfurter Zeitung, she gained entree to many places usually barred to correspondents. When the Nazis came to power, she resigned this post and became foreign correspondent for the great English newspaper, the Manchester Guardian. She was the first foreign correspondent in the northwest of China when the battle against Japanese aggression first began; and for several years marched side by side with the Chinese soldiers. During this time she worked with Dr. Robert Lim in bringing medical aid to the armies and was instrumental in organizing the Chinese Red Cross.

Besides this latest courageous and passionately sincere book, she has written several others: Daughter of Earth, which Lewis Gannett called "one of the greatest American autobiographies," Chinese Destinies, Chinese Red Army Marches, and China Fights Back.

New Paltz may feel a personal interest in Miss Smedley's career, for she spent some time last spring while correcting proof of her book, at the home of Mrs. Basil Ellison, who has known Miss Smedley since her school days. The beauty of the Wallkill Valley made a peaceful contrast to the turbulent events through which she had passed. Now at the start of her lecture tour, we have the opportunity of hearing her story of China from her own lips at the luncheon.

After the luncheon Miss Smedley will autograph copies of the Battle Hymn of China which will be on sale for \$5—all profits above publisher's cost to go to China medical relief.

A very short, very important business meeting will conclude the afternoon.

**STUD. CLUB LUNCHEON
AUSPICIOUS BEGINNING
OF NEW CLUB YEAR**

The New Paltz Study Club launched the 1943-44 program of the organization on Tuesday, Oct. 5, by the annual luncheon, held in the parlors of the Methodist Church. To the success of this event the Methodist ladies contributed materially by serving with their usual efficiency a meal of delicious well-prepared food, for which they have justly earned an outstanding reputation. The tables were gay with autumn-colored zinnias, attractively arranged by Mrs. Robert Atkinson and her committee.

After the special guests, Mrs. Addison Crowell of Walkill and Mrs. Seymour Purdy, Ninth District Director, of Newburgh were briefly welcomed, Mrs. Lindsay O'Connor, President of the State Federation of Women's Clubs, honored the club by discussing the accomplishment of the federation in a campaign to raise funds to buy a bomber to be named for New York State, in the field of combating juvenile delinquency, and in the establishment of scholarships to train nurses so badly needed at the present time. She mentioned also the federation's decision to omit this year the regular federation meeting and to substitute for it next year the gala opening of the Jubilee Celebration of the founding of the federation.

Fitting tributes to the memory of Mrs. Lawrence van den Berg were given in their comments by Mrs. O'Connor, Mrs. Purdy, and Mrs. Margaret LeFevre, the President of the Study Club.

The following selections sung by Miss Caroline Morehouse with Miss Lydia Weeks at the piano were much enjoyed by the listeners: "Homing," Teresa Del Riego; "Thank God for a Garden," Teresa Del Riego; "Sweetheart," Sigmund Romberg; "O What a Beautiful Morning" from Oklahoma.

The speaker of the day, Miss Agnes Smedley, who originally went to China as a newspaper correspondent and remained through many hardship-filled years as a member of the Chinese Red Cross Unit, has recently published her latest book "Battle Hymn of China."

Agnes Smedley, the woman, was so inextricably bound up with her message of Woman in China and Chinese Women in the War that the listeners found it little wonder that the appreciative, wounded Chinese soldiers confused her with Florence Nightingale, the founder of the International Red Cross. The audience saw in Miss Smedley a vibrant, dynamic personality in which are closely intermingled great sincerity, a strong sense of justice, a dominating, selfless love for downtrodden humanity, fundamental honesty, and a delightful, saving sense of humor.

She said that the problem of Chinese women is the problem of democracy and showed by relating several incidents how the women of China are emerging from centuries of inferiority to a position of equality with men through their service on the battlefield, their program of educating the Chinese soldiers behind the lines, their campaign to improve community conditions, and their assuming full responsibility in citizenship side by side with men. Their program of education includes literacy classes, plays involving women's problems and the problems of science, and lectures on democracy, capitalism, socialism, communism and the relationship of China to

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**STUDY CLUB LUNCHEON
AUSPICIOUS BEGINNING
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the other nations of the world. The Chinese listen to new ideas with open minds, accepting what appeals to them and discarding the rest.

She pictured vividly the difficulty in getting teaching material to train badly needed medical assistants for service in pathetically crude field hospitals, the vastness of the desolation brought to China by the ruthless Japanese invader, and the patient, persistent courage of the Chinese people in spite of the atrocities of the criminals who are establishing "the New Order in East Asia."

She told of her own feeling of blood guilt upon the occasion when, as "Friend of China," she was supposed to bring to a Chinese gathering a message of solidarity here at home. To give the eager listeners some crumbs of hope she had to forget the American men who were betraying the principles of democracy and remember only the common people of America who would love China if they knew her and understood her problems. She told this gathering of the refusal of the American women to wear Japanese silk stockings, of the strike of the longshoremen on the California coast, and other tiny crumbs, gleaned from outdated American magazines, carefully omitting, however, any mention of the fact that it was American scrap iron in the bombs and tanks, bringing havoc to China, and American gasoline being used as fuel by the Japanese.

Within sound of the gunfire at the front, where men's minds are free, she was questioned earnestly by Chinese officers as to whether the Western Nations really want China to emerge at the end of the war a strong, victorious, independent China, or whether they prefer to have her weakened by the war and consequently an easier prey to Western exploitation. If they do not subscribe to this latter attitude, why then did America supply Japan with the materials of war? They asked also, "Is Britain afraid of a Chinese victory because of the effect it might have on India? Do the Dutch have the same attitude because of the East Indies?"

These Chinese patriots exacted of Miss Smedley a promise to bring to the American people a message of the needs of China and her firm resolve to continue fighting to the last drop of blood in her veins to expel the invader from her country and to establish for herself an independent place among the nations of the world.

In bringing this message to the women of New Paltz, Miss Smedley has given them much disquieting food for thought, a definite share in the feeling of blood guilt for China's devastation, and a desire to atone in some small way for America's responsibility for this devastation and death brought to China by the barbarians from Tokio.

This luncheon meeting was an auspicious beginning of the new club year, during which the meetings will occur once a month instead of bi-weekly as heretofore.