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Russian, Chinese Soldiers Taught Reason for Fighting

BY ELIZABETH KELL

The Chinese and Russian Armies have been able to endure and fight for so long because of the political education given them which teaches each soldier just what he is fighting for, Miss Agnes Smedley, only foreign correspondent permitted with the Chinese National Army in the field, said here today.

Miss Smedley, who spent 12 years in China, four of them with the national Chinese Army in the field as a correspondent and medical worker, expressed fear that American soldiers are not taught sufficiently what they are fighting for as are the Chinese and Russian soldiers.

"The terrible records of the numbers of American service men who crack up under the strain shows that they are not prepared for the service by being taught sufficiently what they are fighting for," Miss Smedley said.

"To date 300,000 discharges of service men have been made for psychiatric reasons with 30,000 additional men each month. This means that 15 per cent of all discharges, even after the men have been weeded out, are neuro-psychiatric cases. About 1.5 of all men who have come up for examinations are rejected for this reason.

"I have talked to many men since I returned from China and find that the majority of the men discharged because of psychiatric reasons were doing well in civilian life but couldn't stand the sudden strain of war, principally because they say, 'We don't know what the war is being fought about.'

"The Chinese, on the other hand, because so many of their men were illiterate, set up political training schools for every Chinese soldier, called upon educated men and women to teach them history of the war, geography, propaganda methods through plays, singing and many methods. The trained soldiers were often sent back into the army to teach other soldiers."

"There were few mental crack-ups, comparatively speaking, seen by me when I was with the Chinese Army, and the Russian figures show only 3.5 per cent psychiatric cases in their service due to their educational training."

This afternoon Miss Smedley was to talk before the Tulane V-12 navy trainee group in McAlister auditorium and tomorrow at 10:30 a. m. before Newcomb College students. Her lecture tour has taken her to army and navy groups over the United States.

Author of "The Battle Hymn of China," Miss Smedley left New York university in 1919 and went to Europe, studying and teaching English at the University of Berlin, then becoming Far Eastern correspondent for the then liberal German newspaper, the Frankfurter Zeitung, going with the Chinese armies at the front in 1937, spending two years with the guerrillas in the direct rear of the Japanese occupation forces, and serving with the then newly formed Chinese Red Cross Medical Corps. Ill health sent her home, via Hong-Kong, just before the Pearl Harbor attack.