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A FEW THINGS YOU
SHOULD KNOW

About

**WHERE
ARE WE GOING
AND WHY?**

SINCE I returned from China shortly before Pearl Harbor, many Americans have asked me countless questions, both intelligent and unintelligent, about China, most of them revealing unreal conceptions of the conditions under which China fights.

Instead of answering them one by one, I shall relate a single incident of a night's march I made with a guerrilla regiment in a no-man's-land to the north of Japanese-occupied Hankow. This was in the winter of 1940, and the circumstances of the march will reveal the conditions under which the Chinese fought a powerful enemy that is now our enemy.


From spies, the Japanese had learned of the valley in which the guerrilla regiment had bivouacked for a week; and through their own information, the guerrillas had learned that the Japanese intended to attack us at dawn the next morning. It was the dead of winter but the weather had suddenly

grown warm enough to turn the mountain paths and the paths between the rice fields in the valleys into slippery roads over which marching was difficult. On the afternoon we learned of the Japanese plan, we received orders to move to another region. A drizzle had begun to fall; this march would be doubly difficult.

As usual, we ate our last meal at four o'clock; it was the second of the day and consisted of rice and turnips mixed with salt. This was the usual food for weeks at a time, though sometimes the guerrillas got cabbage instead of turnips, and perhaps once a month a little pork cooked in the vegetable. As we ate our last meal, someone laughed and remarked that in our new location things would be better because "the turnips are bigger and redder over there."

There is an old Chinese saying to the effect that when turnips come on the market, the medicine shops do poor business. Despite this, the diet was miserable and the health of the guerrillas poor. Even I, who bought an egg occasionally, suffered from night-blindness, as did so many guerrillas, and malaria added to the problems of the regiment. Even the guerrilla commander was yellow and droopy from chronic malaria. All qui-



 Chinese educated youth give anti-Japanese plays for soldiers.
Miss Smedley took these pictures; the descriptions are her own.

China

BY AGNES SMEDLEY

PHOTOGRAPHS BY THE AUTHOR

nine had to be smuggled in, and it was scant because the guerrillas were poor.

Before beginning to march that night we received final orders. At one point, our route lay just half a mile from a Japanese garrison, and though the Japanese seldom risked night fighting, they all had radio transmission sets. We were therefore ordered to make no sound and show no light. Many men had colds but were ordered to smother them by any means. The only permissible sound would be a soft clapping of the hands in case anyone could not see or get lost. The few horses and mules carrying army supplies would be a danger. I piled my blankets and typewriter on top of the cases carried by one of them, but kept my first-aid kit over my shoulder; and in my pocket I kept some salt and raw garlic to stifle any tendency to cough.

Stragglers in the dark.

It was a horrible night, but we were told we would cover sixty *li*, or twenty miles, before dawn. All went well until darkness fell, and even then it was not so bad because we could hear the sloshing feet of men before us. But soon I began to hear the low clapping of men who could not see; and answering claps that directed them back to the column. We marched single-file, trudging on and on, straining our ears for every sound. It must have been around midnight when a whispered order came down the line to rest; we squatted down or stood, but the earth was too muddy to sit down. The rest period gave the men carrying machine-guns a little respite. The Japanese garrison was not far away on our right, and after five minutes' rest the whisper, "March quickly" came down the line and we began walking as rapidly as we could.

There was an occasional cautious clapping and an answering "sh-h-h-h!" and I heard men trying to strangle their coughing. The nearness of the enemy keyed every man up to a high pitch of awareness until we could feel almost everything about us; with the guerrillas this had become almost an instinct. Behind me I once heard a low exclamation, then something rolling down a bank on my right, then a smothered sob followed by scrambling. A night-blind man had walked right down a muddy embankment and rolled into a muddy rice field. Soon after, a heavily-laden mule went over the embankment and men followed after to help him up and reload him. Then the same night-blind man went down the embankment again, and thereafter someone had to lead him by the hand. A horse



Soldiers find time to study at the front. They go into the hills to avoid air-raids.



In uniform and out—Women's Committee Chinese women dress like this.

started to neigh, but someone belted him over the nose.

The most dangerous spot was a swiftly-flowing but shallow river. The guerrillas had destroyed the stone bridge across it to prevent its use by Japanese

trucks and tanks, and in its place thrown a few rickety boards, now slippery, over it. I knew I could not cross it, and many others thought the same. Some men formed a rope of hands and crossed slowly over (Please turn to page 80)

**What You
Should
Know
about
China**

—SMEDLEY



(This article is continued from page 57) it, but the rest of us waded right through the ice-cold water that reached nearly to our knees. We kept worrying about the splashing feet of the animals, lest the Japanese hear them above the swirling water.

Our column had separated to cross the stream, and many men got lost in the thickets along the river bank; a soft clapping came from every direction until the line was re-formed. But just beyond lay the motor highway which the Japanese used. Just before we reached it, our entire column came to a halt while our machine-gunners took up positions along it in case the enemy should come. When ready, the whispered order flew down the line to "go—run," and we began running, hoping we would not fall and land in a ditch with a sprained or broken ankle. We kept running for some time, then stopped to wait for men who were clapping again. But after that there were sentries armed with rifles along the paths, and we heard their voices saying "turn left" or "turn right." Following their whispered orders in the dark, in about two hours we came to a village where doors opened to us and men, women and children were waiting to give us boiled water to drink.

With the doors closed to show no light, we took stock. Three pack-animals had broken their legs and had to be left behind to die, and one man had fallen off the slippery bridge and broken a rib on the stones in the river-bed; but he was still marching. The rain had begun to pour steadily and, what with our losses, the commanders decided that we spend the rest of the night in near-by villages until dawn came. Peasants led our various units out over the countryside to villages where we could get a little rest and dry our soaked clothing around bonfires built in the center of the rooms.

By dawn those of us who were non-fighters were moving rapidly into a range of hills, while the fighters moved out along the highway and paths along which the enemy was expected to come. About two hours later we heard the sound of fighting begin, with Japanese trench mortars in action and our answering machine-guns.

After a few hours our fighters began to come in from many different directions, carrying their dead and wounded but also twenty new rifles and some ammunition, and leading five new horses. They got a meal of hot rice and turnips and the turnips were indeed larger than those we had eaten before. A number of our men came down sick with heavy colds and two had pneumonia, for rain

See next page

coats were non-existent. They lay in heaps of straw on the earthen floors, but none had blankets. On that day I doctored at least a dozen men sick with malaria and used all the quinine I had.

Multiply this scene a thousand-fold; change it a little here and there; give the big regular armies better clothing and a few trench mortars and some small field pieces, and you have a general picture of the battlefields of Central China at that time. But forget the existence of motor trucks, except those made in America which the Japanese used to transport reinforcements and supplies up from Hankow. Forget about airplanes, except those piloted by Japanese. Forget about electric lights and think of home-made candles or of open bowls filled with peanut oil in which cotton wicks flickered faintly. Think of villages of mud huts with earthen floors, some of them half-destroyed. As for hospitals—no, do not think of them if you fear reality. They were mud huts; or abandoned and half-destroyed school buildings; or temporary bamboo-thatched structures plastered with mud, always in danger of being blasted into dust by enemy bombers. Forget butter, milk, sugar, fruit and a variety of green vegetables. And then you will have some general idea of the way the Chinese lived and fought when I was with them.

An American woman recently asked me if the Chinese eat their dessert first, and if Chinese women wear gowns that fit them like a glove, and what kind of hats they wear. The Chinese women whom I saw in the war zones were in the uniforms of soldiers; they got an unlined cotton uniform in summer and a padded uniform in winter, and their hats were military caps. They were not camp-followers nor were they fighters, though they carried small side arms to fight with if attacked, or with which to kill themselves if threatened with capture; for capture was worse than death for a woman.

Students, teachers there.

These women were educated—girl students, women teachers, some of them former actresses; and a very few were first-aid workers helping care for the wounded, though almost all medical workers in the armies are men. I found one woman, a trained nurse, who served as surgeon and physician and teacher of first-aid workers, in a guerrilla army; she was the only qualified medical worker in the army and, though not a doctor, she did everything. Almost all women were political workers—lecturers to the soldiers, educators and organizers of the common people whom they taught to cooperate with the army as spies against the enemy, as stretcher-bearers and to do other volunteer services.

There were many children in some of the armies, in the guerrilla detachments in particular. They were war-orphans and refugees who had no other home and knew no other life. A woman teacher was generally in charge of their education, teaching them a few hours each day; the rest of the time the children did small chores as orderlies.

The people remained in the war zones, even right up to the battlefield, and

...And now
to the m

1. He was Mess Sergeant, and the handsomest "Mess" in the whole army. As a newly trained WAC, I reported to learn the ropes at Officers' Mess. First thing Sergeant says is, "No coffee for the Colonel! When he drinks coffee, he can't sleep."



2. Two days later, I'm ducking in with coffee for the Colonel when the Mess Sergeant calls out, "Hey! I told you the Colonel never drinks coffee..." "I know," I butted in, "but this is Sanka Coffee. I brought it in myself. This coffee's 97% caffeine-free—can't keep anyone awake!" Then I bolted!



4. Next day the Colonel called in the Mess Sergeant. "Finest coffee I ever tasted. Slept like a rookie! Smart assistant you've got." So-o-o the Mess Sergeant said, "Corporal, I order you to spend tomorrow evening with me. I could use your military strategy!"

FOOD FIGHTS FOR FR

they remained in the rear of the enemy helping the guerrillas, though the Japanese were all around them. Even the little children were deeply anti-Japanese, and once, right on the edge of a battlefield over which the roar of artillery sounded constantly, I glanced up a hillside where a little boy was cutting dried grass as fuel. As he worked he sang a song about Japanese "ghost men without souls" who were despoiling China.

For thousands of miles the war zones were gray, dour territory which existed under a perpetual state of alarm. Yet all China was a place of danger and there was no safe place of refuge. Over these thousands of miles one heard the ceaseless tramp of marching feet and the sound of soldiers singing—songs not of love and romance, nor of nostalgic longing, but songs of battle, of fierce conviction.

When the Japanese began invading China proper in July, 1937, they boasted that they could conquer the country within three months by the use of five divisions. They said the Chinese people did not care who ruled them. Many foreigners thought the same. That was five and a half years ago, and the five divisions are long since dead—perhaps about two million more men with them. Some say five million Chinese soldiers have been killed; the number of civilians who have died in airraids, sickness and epidemics, will never be known.

The Japs were learning.

The Japanese army learned many things about war by practicing on the body of China; it learned not only methods of mobile and guerrilla warfare, but Japanese soldiers were turned into cold and hardened brutes to whom slaughter became a business. While the army had heavy losses, the Japanese navy remained untouched and could strengthen itself with British and American materials until it felt strong enough to attack Pearl Harbor, the key to eastern Asia; and, with our Pacific fleet crippled, it was but a matter of time until Wake and Guam, the Philippines, Hong Kong, Singapore and the Dutch East Indies fell.

We expected Japan to respect international law and declare war on us, forgetting that over five years have passed since it began war on China proper, but that it has not yet declared war on that country. Did we believe the Japanese would not dare do to a white nation what it had done to the lowly Chinese?

The Chinese learned all about Japanese perfidy over a decade ago. As I saw the Chinese soldiers, their greatest gain in these years was the development of national consciousness and a knowledge of their own and foreign countries and of the principles for which mankind is fighting. Even the most backward Chinese armies of the old war-lord type have learned the danger of Japanese conquest. The most advanced ones have learned tremendously more—even how to read and write, and all about Fascism and Democracy.

"Fascism" is one of the countless new terms that has entered the Chinese language: it is used to mean everything

Fascist countries as ones which "believe in war and the conquest of weaker nations." They cannot define democracy any better than can some Americans, but I once asked a platoon of soldiers what they meant by "the new free China after the war." They answered: "We mean that those who grow rice will have enough rice to eat; those that spin and weave will have clothing to wear instead of going ragged; all children will get an education; and there will be work for all."

China's fifth freedom.

This reply is another version of the four freedoms, yet the Chinese thought of them long before the Atlantic Charter. As for the fifth freedom—the right to health—the most advanced Chinese medical men began working on that even before the war, and the greatest step toward it was taken in late 1938 when Dr. Robert K. S. Lim founded the Chinese Red Cross Medical Corps, and, with the help of the National Health Administration and the Army Medical Administration, founded the first great "Wartime Emergency Medical Training School." This institution, which now has branches on a number of fronts, set out to re-train the 200,000 men who constitute the medical personnel in the various armies, the Red Cross mobile medical units, and civilian anti-epidemic units.

After the training schools were founded, thousands of unqualified army medical officers were drawn into them for short-term courses, after which they returned to the front to re-train their staffs; and later were recalled for more and more advanced training. The plan reaches into the far future, when re-trained medical men can become an organic part of a great national public health service in which medical care will be free to all, as education is free. Even in the midst of war, a network of free public clinics have been built up; the foundations of socialized medicine have been laid; though there is still a world of work to do, few nations could have done more under conditions so difficult.



"You gonna vote Republican or Democratic in the coming election?"