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Freelance Revolutionist: Agnes Smedley in Wartime China, 1937–1941

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ABSTRACT
Agnes Smedley is one of the more fascinating figures in the history of Sino-American relations. Albeit once the subject of two excellent biographies, and alternately celebrated and reviled in the United States, she nevertheless remains a relatively obscure figure. As the Sino-American relationship now occupies a crucial place in international politics, it is worthwhile to revisit the career of this ardent feminist and political pilgrim. Amidst the maelstrom of revolution and Sino-Japanese war, she professed faith in a better future. Both her perspicacity and illusions were striking, as she sought to discern – and explain to Americans – the churning reality of her preferred homeland, China. Questions confronting Smedley still linger in the twenty-first century as Beijing and Washington try to accommodate each other's ambitions and rival conceptions of human society.

Between the 1937 Sino-Japanese 'incident' and Pearl Harbour, various Americans in private capacities sought to aid China. These included aviators in the fabled American Volunteer Group – Flying Tigers – eager to check Japanese mastery of Chinese skies. Additionally, Christian missionaries, with support of sponsoring denominations, procured medical and food supplies to ease widespread suffering and broadcast complaints against Japanese villainy. Journalists also featured heavily, amongst whom the Sinophile Edgar Snow once asserted, 'No writing in the Western world contains so much grace and beauty as a line of restrained and balanced Chinese'.[1] His 1936 interviews of Mao Zedong resulted in a classic account – *Red Star Over China* – on the nature of communist leaders.[2] In collaboration with other China-based foreigners, notably New Zealand's redoubtable Rewi Alley, Snow and wife, Nym Wales, devised an ambitious industrial co-operatives scheme to boost China's wartime economy, Indusco. Anna Louise Strong, leaving her comrade-husband and Moscow abode for extended Chinese visits, gave heartfelt testimony in her *One-Fifth of Mankind*: 'When the Chinese unite, organize, clear

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out invaders, and make free the land which they have made independent, the echo of their victory will break more chains in Asia. It will stabilize democracy on earth'.[3]

Of the Americans who as private citizens affiliated with China, none mustered more enthusiasm than Agnes Smedley, perpetual seeker of the just polity.[4] Having survived an impoverished childhood, she gravitated to American radicalism then later to the idea of revolution exemplified by Yan'an, which she idolised. Profoundly non-conformist, this non-doctrinal leftist had persevered in China since late 1928. Her future and China's were never more entwined than after Japan attacked the country in July 1937. She stayed on until infirmity obliged her to leave in spring 1941. 'I could not imagine spending my life outside of China', she afterwards said.[5] To that avowal, she added, 'I always forgot that I was not a Chinese myself'.[6]

Much as she wished, tried though she did, Smedley could not become Chinese. In fact, nowhere in her global trekking did she 'belong' or find political or existential refuge, China included. As elsewhere in her wanderings, she occupied an 'inside-outside position' in China.[7] She assumed the part of impartial observer, but at the same time was a keen participant. She sympathised with the Chinese communists, but never became a card-carrying member. Although a self-styled revolutionary soldier, party discipline, and subordination within a chain of command cut against her mental grain. She remained a freelance revolutionary whilst wanting and waiting for a membership that never materialised. Her feelings for the Chinese people ran deep, but she remained the eternal foreigner. Too partisan to be a reliable or objective analyst, her hagiographic treatment of the Red Army and party cadres was the flipside of her caricaturing the Guomindang and its leader, Chiang Kai-shek, as feckless or odious. Not only did she exaggerate the Red Army's righteousness, she omitted or otherwise downplayed the substantial role assumed by the Guomindang in the anti-Japanese war.

To Smedley, justice assumed socialist and feminist commitments inflected with the outlaw's, Jesse James', temerity, 'as he robbed the rich to give to the poor'.[8] Sceptical of ivory tower sages, she fashioned her socialism in the experience of the marginal classes whence sprang her vagabond father and oppressed mother, dead at 38 from undernourishment and relentless labour.[9] 'Poverty', 'prostitution', 'ignorance', and 'dirt' entangled Smedley's youth: 'My roots are in misery'.[10] Her father dragged his wife and children – five ultimately – from the village of Osgood, Missouri – where Agnes was born in February 1892 – through the coalfields, strike actions, and roughneck company towns of southern Colorado. Boozer, womaniser, gambler, spendthrift, erstwhile lawman, and often unemployed, he periodically deserted his family to return after roaming. An amusing raconteur, he never wholly alienated the affections of Agnes, who helped bankroll his drinking and other dissipations into old age. For her mother, Agnes felt pity, mixed with resentment for

dispensing whippings and contracting her to locals in need of domestic service. She also regarded her mother as prime example of what to avoid – household drudge, breeder of children, underpaid retainer to the frontier's bumpkin elite.[11]

Agnes snapped family tethers at age 16. Although a product of sketchy public education, she satisfied local standards to teach at a primary school in Raton, New Mexico. Her pupils spoke Spanish, in which language she lacked proficiency. She also waited tables and sold magazine subscriptions door-to-door, her precincts touching New Mexico, Colorado, and Texas. By pluck, she left this dead-end lot, heeding the advice of her unlettered mother: 'Go on an' git an edjicashun [education].'[12] With aid from a maternal aunt, who sold herself to men, and funds from an unrequited cowboy suitor, Smedley learned stenography in Greeley, Colorado, then obtained rudiments of a college education at Tempe Normal School in Arizona. An able student, though never awarded a degree, she subsequently snatched bits of higher learning at other institutions: San Diego Normal School, University of California-Berkeley, New York University, and the University of Berlin.

Smedley drifted into a short-lived marriage with a Swedish-American engineer, Ernest Brundin, whom she met in Tempe. Sophisticated and cosmopolitan compared to her, he struck Smedley as a cut above the men that she had known. Brundin's socialist ideas and Marxist companions helped shape her political orientation, already taking nascent form via the union-mining militancy of an important organiser, Mother Jones.[13] But at age 20, when wedded, Smedley shrank from sexual intimacy, repugnance fed by anxiety about unwanted pregnancy and what she perceived as the family trap for women.[14] Eight months elapsed before she allowed the marriage consummated. Lack of reliable prophylactics resulted in two pregnancies, each terminated by abortion. Not until after her marriage dissolved did Smedley's inhibitions about sexual relations melt, allowing her to delight in, and boast about, a procession of men of 'all colors and shapes'.[15] She once joyfully declared, 'I'm polygamous!'[16] She also likely enjoyed romantic liaisons with a few women and detected in the lesbian community one means of defying the patriarchy.[17]

However much she revelled in sexual independence, and resolved to 'take sex like a man', serenity of mind eluded Smedley.[18] Loneliness and feelings of worthlessness plagued her, which despair she numbed by intensive work and occasional alcoholic binges. She also contemplated suicide, attempted at least once in 1918 by gas stove in her New York apartment following rape by an acquaintance, Herambalal Gupta. But she confessed herself too much a coward to act decisively.[19] Recurrent financial worries exacerbated depression, ameliorated but not cured by electric shock therapy and psychoanalytic treatment. Still, she sought to live affirmatively even when fending off

emotional torments. She broadened her stenographic skills into editorial expertise. Then she pushed into writing, streaked by the melodramatic but saved by pungency and conviction.

Drawing on her family's experience, Smedley's 1929 novel, *Daughter of Earth*, won praise for depicting life amongst society's forsaken poor. The novel played upon this memorable line: 'Where I am not, there is happiness'.[20] As a budding advocate-journalist, Smedley wrote for the Socialist Party newspaper, *The Call*. And as an editor/writer, she hired on with the family-planning activist and sex educator Margaret Sanger. Smedley's work for Sanger's periodical, *The Birth Control Review*, anchored a friendship dedicated to promoting women's reproductive rights. Smedley later came to the attention of the radical, Emma Goldman, a connexion that further enhanced her standing in leftist circles as a working-class heroine with racial minority bona fides – her father being part Cherokee.

Smedley's knack for friendship extended to not only Goldman and Sanger but also to Kathe Kollwitz, Madame Sun Yat-sen, Carson McCullers, Pearl S. Buck, and Katherine Anne Porter. Smedley also liked those men whom she thought possessed advanced thinking and confident masculinity, by her definition neither dainty nor swaggering. 'I hate female men above all', she acknowledged. She counted as sturdy favourites Snow, Upton Sinclair, Roger Baldwin, Langston Hughes, Zhou Enlai, Jawaharlal Nehru, Joseph Stilwell, Zhu De – Chu Teh – and Evans Carlson.[21] In an unguarded moment, this devout feminist, who gamely circulated in a male-dominated world, admitted, 'I seem to get along with men only'.[22]

India activism dominated Smedley's pre-China career. Whilst an occasional student in 1915 at Berkeley, Smedley encountered proponents of Indian liberation from the British Raj. She then embraced India's cause, which *inter alia* served as deliverance from whatever snares of nursery and kitchen lay hidden in her mind. Having relocated to New York City and bohemian Greenwich Village in her early twenties, she became a trusted comrade to Indian exiles, handling their secret communications. British and American intelligence agencies, joined in 1917 in Great War co-operation, interpreted her doings as aiding Germany. This led to her arrest in spring 1918 on charges of sedition and six-month confinement – until after the Armistice – in New York jails. Amongst her cellmates, she met the defeated produced by capitalism: misfits, outcasts, criminals. She honoured these victims in her socialism, its essence captured in *Daughter of Earth*:

> It is good that we should each know how others suffer; and if we have already known, that we should not forget; that we be forced to the level of the most miserable of men before we judge, and that we experience in our hearts again and again the suffering of the dispossessed.[23]

In 1920, Smedley joined the crew of a Polish-American freighter as a steward to wait upon third-class passengers. She had notions of reconnecting with Indian agitators residing in Berlin, seeing something of the roiled post-war continent, visiting Bolshevik Russia, and reaching India to make whatever contributions she might. In the event, she jumped ship in Danzig, then made her way to Germany, still agitated by the 1919 Spartacist uprising and stumbling into hyperinflation and rampant unemployment.[24] In Berlin, she worked with Indian radicals connected to Virendranath Chattopadhyaya, an exponent of violent rebellion.

Of unswerving political purpose, Chattopadhyaya had been born in 1880 to a Brahmin family of privilege and scholarly distinction. He awed Smedley, at least at first. She became his lieutenant, faithfully taking his side in intra-Indian imbroglios. She accompanied him on errands that included visits to the Soviet Union, where he headed the Indian delegation at noisy Comintern meetings: 'To me he seemed something like thunder, lightning, and rain'. Smedley even discarded longstanding scruples and for eight years lived as his common-law wife: 'I suppose I would walk barefoot around the world to help him'.[25] But his philandering demoralised her, as did his morbid jealousy of her past lovers and nagging doubts about her fidelity. His version of personal and household asceticism deepened the strain. Smedley meanwhile shouldered domestic tasks – cooking, shopping, and cleaning – whilst hosting entertainments for furtive revolutionaries and members of his demanding family, who regarded her as *déclassé*.[26] Her profanity-laced conversation and coarser manners additionally read as lower-class markers, detrimental to winning over respectable people to India's fight. In her own view, she became, like her mother, 'drab and unbeautiful'. The 'only sign of life left in me is my swearing and cursing'.[27] Smedley eventually fled from Chattopadhyaya and into seclusion, overwrought and physically undone: 'My desire to live ebbed and I lay ill for nearly three years. For whole days I remained in a coma, unable to move or speak, longing only for oblivion'.[28]

Smedley recovered mental-physical balance thanks to psychoanalytic intervention. The therapeutic benefit of writing *Daughter of Earth* also helped, as did involvement in Berlin's English-language theatre, thespian art hitherto a dormant interest. Separation from Chattopadhyaya and his fellow intriguers had not diminished Smedley's championing of Indian independence: 'I love the Indian movement with all its strength and all its imbecilities'.[29] Barred by British authorities from entering India, she evidently decided to sneak into the country through a China portal. Having traversed Siberian and Soviet spaces, she arrived in Harbin in December 1928.

Smedley never set foot in India. Becoming the pre-eminent cause of Smedley's life, China eclipsed it. Exceeding anything that she had known in childhood or seen even in post-war Berlin, the scale of Chinese poverty, squalor, and begging shocked her. So, too, did the casual cruelty and

debasement suffered by women as concubines and slaves or cripples with bound feet – 'golden lilies' – not to mention female infanticides.[30] The gap in wealth, power, and advantage separating a privileged few from ragged millions shook her, their struggle for justice striking her as epic. In a mood approximating gratitude, she experienced renewal, a surging to do 'a little good' in one corner of the world.[31]

Smedley from 1930 to 1933 also worked intermittently with Comintern intelligence in China. This centred on the resourceful spy Richard Sorge and his chief collaborator, the leftist correspondent of the *Asahi Shimbun*, Ozaki Hotsumi. Their clandestine doings focused on monitoring Japanese activities in northern China inimical to Soviet security. This involved Smedley in quite unexceptional jobs – assembling facts, writing reports – but also helping Sorge run a network of covert operatives. He apparently thought Smedley a reliable accomplice. She also became his lover even whilst he chased additional women and she assorted men, both Western and Asian – including Ozaki.[32] Simultaneous with her adventures in espionage, Smedley worked in Shanghai as a reporter for Germany's prestigious liberal newspaper, *Frankfurter Zeitung*. She thrived in that capacity until the Nazi curtain rung down on its Jewish owners.

Smedley won a journalistic coup in December 1936 in Xi'an, where she went to study political conditions. There popular opposition to Chiang Kai-shek's inactivity *vis-à-vis* Japan simmered and feeling ran against Guomindang prosecution of communist military units. In the event, Smedley, in co-operation with a young New Zealand journalist, James Bertram, delivered radio broadcasts followed by news agencies and chancelleries around the world. Slanted against Chiang, these bulletins analysed the violence – at least 30 members of Chiang's entourage killed – the temporary imprisonment of the generalissimo, and the labyrinthine negotiations that led to his Christmas Day release. That leniency, incidentally, Smedley disapproved as she thought the 'bastard' unwilling to lead China against Japan and despised him as a 'tottering' tyrant.[33] The first phase of the Xi'an disturbances endangered Smedley's safety; marauding soldiers in anti-Chiang zeal ransacked her living quarters and threatened to kill her. She nonetheless retained composure, enough to attend to the medical needs of several dozen Red Army soldiers, plus women and children in their train, previously taken captive by Chiang.[34]

When not hustling for news worthy stories or in an assignation, Smedley advanced still other causes. She promoted family planning in Shanghai and spread the principles and practices taught by Sanger. Smedley brought the stirring work of Kollwitz to the attention of Chinese intellectuals and publishers and befriended the poet/essayist Lu Xun. With him, she worked in the League of Left Wing Writers, an association dedicated to cultural guerrilla warfare.[35] She found time to publish two well-regarded books – *Chinese Destinies*, an account of Chinese society with emphasis on the hardships

endured by the lowly, and *China's Red Army Marches*, a sympathetic portrait of Mao's Chinese Soviet Republic in Jiangxi province.[36] Smedley also plunged into work with Madame Sun Yat-sen, the wife of China's late revolutionary leader, in organising an English-language newspaper, *China Forum*, of decidedly anti-Chiang bent. Sponsored by the League of Civil Rights, this publication excoriated prison irregularities and assassinations and sought to protect dissenting intellectuals from persecution.

None of the above activities endeared Smedley to Guomintang officialdom, the British Secret Service wary of her Indian connexions, French sleuths, Japanese counter-intelligence, or China-based Western businesses with stakes in the *status quo*. Her American and German passports in the reign of extraterritoriality protected her, however, as did her standing as a respected writer. These evidently were enough to spoil sporadic moves to evict her from China. Yet she lived under constant surveillance, punctuated by death threats from shadowy sources, probably the Japanese secret service. Moreover, British and American critics did not cease from pillorying her in the press, damning her as wanton woman, Red mischief-maker, and Soviet hireling. Against the charge of being a communist, she fumed, 'They can all kiss my pazaza'.[37] Her politer public riposte lyrically invoked her American legacy with gloss on her family and feeling for China's destitute:

> I am an American, my family have been Americans for generations and I am proud of it. The soil of Missouri, the rocks of Colorado and the sagebrush of Arizona and New Mexico are a part of my very being. I cannot give up certain principles of Democracy that were born with me . . . . Anyone who knows the pitiful condition of the Chinese peasant and worker cannot help sympathize with some of the aims of the Chinese Communists and I suppose that makes me a Communist sympathizer, but I am no more than that.[38]

Medical matters, family business, and securing of journalistic commissions necessitated Smedley's taking brief trips abroad to Europe and Stateside in the early 1930s. She also took a longer sabbatical to a Soviet sanatorium, where she husbanded her unsteady strength and wrote *China's Red Army Marches*. Otherwise, until May 1941, she resided in China, bearing witness to the Sino-Japanese war, and the achievements, as she understood them, of Chinese communism.

The revolution's purported virtues were nowhere better evidenced than in Mao's cave city of Yan'an. In that mountainous retreat in the rugged northwest Shaanxi province, Smedley lived as honoured guest during much of 1937. With the aid of translators, she gave lectures to assemblies of cadres attentive to her views on American life, international relations, and birth control. She studied Chinese – Mandarin – albeit with disappointing results: 'I'm picking up something, but I'll never learn the language'.[39] She took excursions on horseback through the loess dust-covered countryside. She learned cavalry tricks. She improved upon her pistol/rifle marksmanship, first advanced in

youth by cowboy tutors. She waged war on rodent infestations, cultivated a garden plot, and helped obtain medicines for the Yan'an dispensary of Dr George Hatem. She sought otherwise to replenish her vigour, sapped by stomach, pulmonary, and undiagnosed heart disorders. Above all else, Smedley thrilled to the ongoing Yan'an experiment in lived equality, centred on distributive justice, literacy campaigns, and people's government. To advertise these achievements, she decided to write a biography of Zhu De, a military mastermind and co-equal with Mao in Yan'an. This prospective book, as she conceived it, would complement Snow's *Red Star Over China*. She hoped her study would serve as a vehicle to explain the origins and goals of the communist movement – hers would be *the* political history of a generation of Marxist revolutionaries as they put China right against intruders and internal rot. She would also tell the story of a specific man, one who was more than just symbol of the valiant peasantry: 'I had never known any human being with such a tenacious lust for life, nor one so basically democratic'.[40] She also claimed, in what smacked of projection, to see in Zhu 'an undercurrent of wistful melancholy and sadness'.[41] Pursuant to this biography, Smedley interviewed Zhu for countless hours, took copious notes, and pondered his ideas, philosophical no less than military. She talked with his colleagues, Mao included. Her admiration for Zhu eventuated in unalloyed hero worship. For his part, Zhu co-operated with Smedley's interrogations and encouraged her research. The 460-page result, published in 1956 – six years after Smedley's death – was *The Great Road: The Life and Times of Chu Teh*, a document featuring allegorical anecdotes to illustrate the general's presumptive saintliness.[42]

Smedley's Yan'an idyll ended mortifyingly. To enliven the place's nocturnal hours, Smedley instructed the communist leadership in the joys of Western dance – exuberant square dancing and the fox trot. Mao, Zhou En-lai, and Zhu were amongst her pupils. But Zhu's wife, Kang Keqing, already miffed that her husband devoted hours in private to conversing with Smedley, bristled disapproval. Other female comrades similarly objected to the indecency of their menfolk loping about under instruction from a Western woman, one around whom rumours of past improprieties swirled. Zhu's wife led a scolding chorus intent on ending the bourgeois frivolity and hazards to male moral health. As for Smedley, she entertained no illusions. She understood that the women regarded the dancing as lewd, a 'kind of public sexual intercourse', and that she had gained a reputation for 'corrupting the Army'. Still, she persisted, offending the prevailing norms, insisting upon her own standards as being sound and modern. She dismissed the faultfinders as prudes in need of recreation, in effect trivialising their earnestness and fortitude as Long March survivors. She congratulated Zhu and others as they continued the dance lessons. 'It takes someone as strong as a commander-in-chief to defy some of the women here', she sighed.[43]

Worse than not desisting in the face of distaff censoriousness was a role that Mao's wife, Ho Tzu-chen, attributed to her. She thought Smedley a busybody and charged her with acting as Mao's go-between with a beautiful young woman, Lily Wu, with whom Mao apparently cavorted as opportunity allowed. One night in Lily's cave, Ho found her errant husband. Before the ensuing altercation ended, Ho also confronted Smedley and, wielding her flashlight like a club, lunged at the 'foreign devil'. Struck, Smedley retaliated with her fists, knocking the indignant Ho to the floor. Ho later sprinkled imprecations with threats to kill Smedley. Unsurprisingly, given the circumstances, her hosts concluded that for the sake of domestic tranquillity, Smedley should vacate Yan'an. Her application to join the Chinese Communist Party [CCP] fell into abeyance until determinations about her temperamental suitability and self-discipline. Fortuitously, denial in 1937 of CCP membership allowed her in the Joe McCarthy era to swear that she had never been a card-carrying communist. Dazed by rejection, and lamed with spinal injury from a Yan'an horse-riding accident, Smedley left the communist citadel in September.[44]

However bruised bodily and mentally, Smedley struggled on. She soon landed assignment as a correspondent attached to the mobile headquarters of the Eighth Route Army. This communist formation – originally 43,000 personnel, divided into three divisions – operated nominally under Guomindang authority in compliance with the Xi'an protocols and government-CCP united front. Command of the Eighth rested with Zhu De, who in northern China directed guerrilla units behind Japanese lines to harass Imperial armies and disrupt their logistics/supplies. Smedley accompanied the Eighth during October 1937-January 1938, allowing her to continue conversations with Zhu and providing an abundance of copy that she filed with press agencies. In blazing passion, she also wrote appeals to progressive organisations and personages – not least Nehru and the Indian National Congress – to send money, food, medicines, and medical staff to support the Eighth.[45]

Smedley subsequently catalogued her experiences in *China Fights Back: An American Woman with the Eighth Route Army*. In a series of romanticised tropes, frequently straying from realistic reportage, she recounted the Eighth's darting manoeuvres against the Japanese flanks and rear; the delicacy with which the Army helped local civilians; the *esprit de corps* that permeated officer and enlisted ranks; and the determination of a pauperised nation to resist. She lauded the men for their ready acceptance of female comrades as equals, neither molested nor otherwise exploited.[46] She applauded the Eighth's women, who served in medical capacities and occasionally went forth as fighters:

> Of all the warriors of China, none are more unwavering, more embittered, more filled with hatred, than the women. Women suffer much more than the men by war. If captured, the men are merely killed by one means or another. But the women are

> outraged by whole squads of Japanese soldiers, then the older ones or the ugly ones killed. The young handsome ones are put in Japanese Army brothels, called Consolation Houses of the Great Imperial Army.
>
> I have seen many women who have escaped from the Japanese. Some are insane, some white haired. I have seen little girls with white hair – they also have escaped from the hands of the Japanese. Some such women and girls give birth to half-Japanese babies. The babies are drowned or strangled at birth.[47]

Smedley showed her grit whilst travelling with the Eighth. As in Xi'an, with only self-taught knowledge, she administered first aid and medicines to people suffering from battle wounds, ulcerated legs, digestive ailments, syphilis. She meanwhile tolerated the stares of local peoples who had never seen a blue-eyed Caucasian and additionally perplexed by her seemingly indeterminate sex and unfathomable nature.[48] She also endured persistent spinal pain, sundry illnesses, and poor nutrition compounded by poisoned food. These afflictions necessitated her periodic transport in litter hefted by men already burdened by deprivation. This circumstance embarrassed Smedley whilst her relative material advantages – an income, better bedding, an orderly, a horse – separated her from people with whom she wanted communion. Whilst others walked, she rode and enjoyed meals that, however mean, were better than the still thinner gruel they consumed:

> I am tortured by this inequality . . . . Always in my mind, I associate myself with the men walking by my side. What money I have I share with them . . . . Does this mean that I am indulging in weak, middle-class sympathy? If so, so be it, and let all make the most of it. If helping workers and peasants is middle class, petty bourgeois, then let it be that forever. To me it means merely that I cannot live a life apart from them.[49]

Alas, to her chagrin, she could not close the distance dividing her from the common soldiers. In a sombre mood, she mediated upon her solitude, a condition to which she had long been accustomed but then felt especially sharp. She yearned for solidarity with the Eighth's men, whilst making their lives intelligible not only to Western readers but also to herself. She wrote in her diary, 4 November 1937, after hearing an army platoon sing:

> Their voices were like a string orchestra in the night . . . I can never know fully the meaning, the essence of the Chinese struggle for liberation which lies embedded in the hearts of these workers and peasants. I am still an onlooker and my position is privileged. I will always have food though these men hunger. I will have clothing and a warm bed though they freeze. They will fight and many of them will lie on frozen battlefields. I will be an onlooker. I watched them blend with the darkness . . . they still sang. And I hungered for the spark of vision that would enable me to see into their minds and hearts and picture their convictions . . . .[50]

For the Japanese, Smedley nurtured 'blind' hatred. She would have liked to go into combat, preferably in company with her Chinese sisters. Zhu and staff vetoed the idea ostensibly because they bore responsibility for any foreign

woman in their keeping.[51] Instead of risking her life in battle, Zhu instructed Smedley to repair to Hankou to recuperate, raise funds for the Eighth, and propagandise on behalf of the paramount cause. She obeyed amidst a cataract of tears and protest. But realising that another display of Yan'an-like unruliness would count against her, she conceded: 'If it is your wish, I must go'.[52] She hastened in January 1938 to China's makeshift capital of Hankou, where she stayed through the Japanese siege and left just before the city's October capitulation.

The Hankou campaign inflicted fearful casualties, one million dead or wounded Chinese soldiers – primarily Guomindang – and struck commentators as comparable to Madrid holding out against Francisco Franco's fascist rebellion.[53] By the time of Smedley's arrival, the Hankou population had already swollen by hundreds of thousands of evacuees with more displaced people pouring in. They required lodging, food, and medical succour, none of which existed in satisfactory supply. At the same time, aerial bombardment, especially heavy from August onward, pounded Hankou and its environs. Whilst sheltering Chiang's government and representatives of its united-front allies, notably Zhou Enlai, Hankou also hosted legions of diplomats, foreign military observers, and international correspondents. Even Christopher Isherwood and W.H. Auden waltzed in, winning an audience with Smedley. She likely thought them effete and tended to link all Englishmen with the British Raj, who as a matter of principle she loathed. According to the Isherwood-Auden telling, she marshalled little courtesy but radiated 'grim and sour'.[54]

Amongst other people who passed through Hankou, Smedley encountered some whom she liked and, in instances, had previously known. These included Americans such as Foreign Service Officer John Paton Davies, Stilwell – then a colonel and military *attaché* under Ambassador Nelson Johnson – and Carlson, then a roving Navy Department observer, with whom Smedley appears to have been smitten. The journalistic set numbered Snow, Anna Louise Strong, the *New York Times*' Tillman Durdin, Robert Capa, a *Life* photographer, and Freda Utley, a philosophically elastic British writer. Smedley overcame her own prejudices to befriend London's ambassador to the Chinese court, Sir Archibald Clark Kerr. A Fabian socialist, Indusco booster, and admirer of the Eight Route Army's feats, he became one of Smedley's avid collaborators in raising money and supplies for Chinese relief.[55]

A member of an ever-shrinking group of diehards in Hankou determined to stay as long as feasible , Smedley supped and shared ideas with fellow China hands.[56] To the extent a consensus arose, the war must deplete Japan over time; the Chiang-communist alliance was fragile contrary to official pronouncements puffing its robustness; and the United States and Britain were remiss in not helping China against Japan.

As opposed to the Yan'an burlesque and charges against her, Smedley won plaudits in Hankou. She endeared herself to Davies, who thought her 'an authentic American in the tradition of Tom Paine, the suffragettes, and Wobblies'.[57] Stilwell, who joined Smedley in lengthy Hankou confabs and followed her exploits with the Eighth, later conferred on her this title: 'the bravest front-line soldier I ever knew'.[58] The most perceptive evaluation of Smedley in Hankou came from an unexpected source, Utley. Having later converted to fierce anti-communism and turned against her former comrades, Utley nevertheless offered in 1970 an admiring recollection. She had chanced upon Smedley along Hankou's river embankment:

> She was putting into rickshaws and transporting to the hospital, at her own expense, some of those wretched wounded soldiers, the sight of whom was so common in Hankou, but whom others never thought of helping. Such was her influence over "simple" men as well as over intellectuals that she soon had a group of rickshaw coolies who would perform this service for the wounded without payment.

Of Smedley in Hankou, Utley asserted that her humanity trumped the mistakenness of her political allegiances:

> [Smedley] was one of the few people of whom one can truly say that her character had given beauty to her face, which was both boyish and feminine, rugged and yet attractive. [She was] one of the few spiritually great people I have ever met, [with] that burning sympathy for the misery and wrongs of mankind which some of the saints and some of the revolutionaries have possessed. For her the wounded soldiers of China, the starving peasants and the overworked coolies, were brothers in a real sense. She was acutely ... aware of their misery and could not rest for trying to alleviate it.[59]

Smedley in Hankou must have gratified Zhu. As expected, she testified in her reports to the *Manchester Guardian, Nation, Vogue*, and *Modern Review* about the city's resilience and the fighters' courage. She also sent pleas to Americans and Europeans to support the Chinese effort with funds, clothing, medicines, and food. She threw herself into publicising and canvassing for the Chinese Red Cross and its dynamic director, Dr. Robert K.S. Lin.[60] With him, she took part in recruiting medical specialists. These came from India, in which case Nehru played a role. Canadian personnel arrived, too, for example, the Marxist physician Norman Bethune, a stormy petrel but also a renowned blood transfusion specialist, who died in November 1939 of septicaemia in northern China.[61]

After leaving Hankou, Smedley resumed her career as participant-chronicler with army units deployed behind the Japanese lines. Thanks to Zhou Enlai's intervention with the responsible officers, she marched during November 1938-April 1940 with varied detachments of the communist New Fourth Army, including its fast-moving Storm Guerrillas whilst they ranged along the northern and southern banks of the Yangzi River eastward of Hankou. Her tour of this zone amounted to the lengthiest such assignment

enjoyed by any foreign correspondent, male or female, during China's anti-Japanese war.[62] All the while, she was engrossed in securing medicines and surgical instruments and administering to patients as best she could. Smedley proved vital in establishing army delousing stations and lobbied for their funding.[63] Hospital conditions overall were ghastly, as she described in an unforgettable scene:

> On the earthen floor, in dark, insanitary huts, lie long rows of sick and wounded men, like sardines in a tin. The place is filled with the moaning of men who cannot control their suffering. Haggard men stagger up now and then to make their way to a big urinal bucket, and no one helps them even reach it. In other dark little rooms I found men, long since dead, lying side by side with the living.[64]

As with the Eighth Route Army, Smedley lectured diverse rural, urban, CCP, and Gomindang audiences on a range of subjects. These touched on the rights of women, world affairs, personal hygiene, and public health measures against the spread of typhoid, dysentery, and cholera. She tried again to immerse herself in the lives of the people, share their food and be available, albeit aware that full acceptance was impossible. At the same time, she did not hesitate to criticise the purported faults of her companions, especially if in her judgement they slackened their vigilance or acted too mildly. Cases in point occurred when comrades spared Japanese soldiers 'captured in the very act of raping women. I would have killed such Japanese, but the Communists brought them in and began educating them'.[65] She meanwhile continued to dream of new China, untrammelled by foreign trespassers or plutocrats; their stranglehold on the peasantry must end in, what she felt would be, redemptive violence.[66]

Smedley's exertions with the Storm Guerrillas were exhausting. The tax on her physical wellbeing – in conjunction with malarial relapse – manifested in toenails that fell off, loosened and decaying teeth, liver malady, eye inflammation, and hives.[67] Ineffable terrors lurked in her everyday awareness. Japanese warplanes in particular, whether on reconnaissance or bombing sorties, might signal sudden death: 'Numberless air-raids had taught me no bravery. Each deathlike wail of a siren, each beating gong from a hillside, clanging bell, or . . . warning of a bugle, caused my heart to constrict'.[68]

Smedley's respite from hardship and loneliness came in the form of an orphaned lad, Shen Kuo-hwa. Like thousands of other parentless boys adopted by Chinese armies and employed as orderlies, his exact age was unknown. Formerly a semi-starved wanderer, he appeared somewhere near 11 years old when the Storm Guerrillas told him to care for Smedley. He prepared her food, looked after her belongings, and otherwise waited on her. He also defended her, as when suspicious villagers gasped at the white apparition that materialised in their midst, a seeming avatar of impending dreads. She, in turn, deloused his clothes, fed him with as nutritious food as could be scraped together, and tried otherwise to insulate him from misery

and guard him from enemy actions. The Smedley-Shen relationship became more than symbiotic: 'I came to love the boy'. In a burst of unforeseen maternal pride, Smedley exulted that 'the child adopted me has his mother'.[69]

Before leave taking from the Storm Guerrillas, Smedley asked permission of their commander, Li Hsien-nien, to adopt Shen as her son with the immediate aim of sending him to western China for safety's sake and ensure his obtaining a proper education. Li approved, contingent on Shen's agreeing to the proposed arrangement. But after pondering the matter, Shen refused. Presumably, the prospect of swapping the army's protective paternalism and the fraternity of boys for sponsorship by an enigmatic if kind being seemed a leap of faith too far. Shen gave an explanation that may not have encompassed all his qualms but drew the sting of disappointment with implied hope of future unification: 'No, you cannot adopt me now, because all men must stay at the front and fight'.[70] Smedley never saw Shen after her separating from the Storm Guerrillas. Whether he survived the war or afterwards flourished were unanswered questions to the day she died.[71]

Deteriorating health made Smedley seek emergency help. Emaciated and ill, she first convalesced in a Chongqing clinic.[72] She later traversed Japanese-controlled zones by plane to the British crown colony of Hong Kong. During her Hong Kong stay, September 1940-May 1941, Smedley began to rebound. A gall bladder procedure helped, after which she enjoyed restorative trysts with her surgeon.[73] She also sought the company of American writers and photojournalists who passed through Hong Kong to observe the Sino-Japanese war, such as Erskine Caldwell, Margaret Bourke-White, and Ernest Hemingway. Smedley's interaction with Chinese women included an interview with Madame Chiang during a Hong Kong stopover. Despite detesting the generalissimo, Smedley thought Madame intelligent, elegant, and self-possessed. She belonged to the thoroughbred race: 'Next to her I felt a little like one of Thurber's melancholy hounds'.[74]

Smedley's irrepressible revulsion for British imperialism surfaced in Hong Kong – despite her dependency on British hosts, notably the colony's liberal-minded Anglican bishop, Ronald Hall, who provided Smedley room and board without charge at his residence. In an exercise of rare prudence, Smedley muted her most violent feelings about British perfidy and malfeasances, although not from regard for the good reverend. She wanted to deny Crown authorities any pretext to evict her. Thus, for example, she privately ruminated yet did not publicly amplify her conviction that China's communist patrolled areas eradicated moral blights – brothels, child prostitution, and courtesanship – but they still festered in Hong Kong. And it was under a pseudonym, 'American Observer', that she penned two withering articles for the *South China Morning Post* dealing with British failings in Hong Kong services related to public welfare and education.[75]

Whilst the nearby war mainly focused Smedley's thoughts, flagging health and fluctuating spirits subverted her collaboration with local agencies to purchase or distribute medicines to anti-Japanese armies. Nor did she pepper Anglo-American philanthropies and readerships with her customary appeals to fund relief programmes. She doubtless would have liked to petition Washington officialdom to devise means for containing Japanese aggression through embargoes, sanctions, censure, and naval-military flexing but here, too, lethargy undermined her. The attack in January 1941 by Chiang's forces on the New Fourth Army, a deed that *de facto* ended the Communist-Guomindang alliance, also did not prompt her to respond as she might have previously. In contrast to her fiery Xi'an moment, Smedley did not rally to broadcast this instance of Chiang vengeance.

Crossing the Pacific by meandering Norwegian freighter in May 1941, Smedley disembarked in Los Angeles after a four-week voyage. Her ideas were to rest, regain emotional equilibrium, and recoup health.[76] She would reconnect with siblings and friends. For most of them, her affections had not faded but their lives and doings were remote. Having lived on the edges of penury for years, she also hoped to replenish her bank account via lecture honoraria and serialised essays on world affairs.[77] In the latter, naturally, she meant to concentrate on China's plight and the need for American initiatives to ease it. She expected to return to China at some auspicious point in the future. Until then, she would obey this imperative: 'To tell America the truth about China, how the Chinese had fought and were still fighting'.[78]

Mixed feelings accompanied Smedley when she re-entered the United States in spring 1941: curiosity, eagerness, and anxiety. She wanted to assimilate but not at the cost of losing what she regarded as her Chinese soldier-self permanently enlisted in the fight for right.[79] Alas, her first contacts – southern Californians – did not bode well for her renewed American life. She perceived them as wallowing in vapid culture and extravagance and enthralled by the mirage of isolationism.[80] Neither allegiance to the journalist's craft nor feminism muted her censure of commercialised news media and women's societies.

> I learned that in order to tell the American people a few facts you must first sell them soap, dandruff cures, or Crazy Crystals for Constipation . . . .
>
> There seemed to be a sea of middle- and upper-class women, few of whom had anything to do. They had less connection with most of the main activities of their society then even Chinese women . . . . And women's "clubs" seemed to be places where women made weak attempts to fill up their empty lives. Speaking before one of them, I kept seeing in front of me a great room gleaming with white linen, cutlery, elegant clothes and costume jewelry as useless and artificial as the creatures who wore them . . . .

> There was waste and softness on every hand. No person in California could think of life without a car. Mystic cults of every kind grew as scum forms on the surface of a stagnant pond. Even radio broadcasters lectured on astrology, telling people how to plant gardens and regulate their entire lives by the stars. Lindbergh drew a crowd of twenty-five thousand in the Hollywood Bowl.[81]

Smedley ended another broadside with this shot against the lotus-eaters: 'Sometimes when I look at Southern California, I say: "Let the Japanese come!"'[82]

From 1941 onward, Smedley championed Chinese liberation in radio broadcasts, public fora, and speeches to college assemblies, the Council on Foreign Relations, and civic associations. She wrote prodigiously for newspapers and journals. Her most widely remarked publication appeared in 1943, *Battle Hymn of China*, detailing the combat experience of Chinese soldiers whilst mythologising the Red Army for its 'grandeur'. Smedley also worked on what she expected would be her *magnum opus*, the Zhu biography.

Upon quitting California in 1942, Smedley moved to more congenial climes: New York City then Yaddo, an upstate retreat for writers and artists in Saratoga Springs where she lived through March 1948. There she passed moments as close to tranquillity as her inherent unsettledness ever allowed. Apart from devouring the wartime news, Smedley in Yaddo indulged her passion for gardening just as she had in her Yan'an lair. She studied those ideas of Thomas Jefferson that she judged supportive, such as this assertion: 'Rebellion against tyrants is obedience to God'.[83] She relaxed her antipathy to organised religion to probe Quaker tenets, becoming an occasional attendee at meetings, albeit not a communicant. She entertained friends of longstanding, most gratifyingly Stilwell and Carlson; the latter bolstered her with his unfailing optimism in the Chinese future and the post-war world: 'Keep your spirits up, you old campaigner, and keep your faith strong'.[84] And she formed new attachments with Yaddo residents, notably Langston Hughes. Smedley also took advantage of New York's cultural offerings and Broadway fare. She made the acquaintance of Buck, the 1938 Nobel laureate, whose reservations about the quality of many Christian missionaries in China chimed with Smedley's distaste for the proselytising breed.[85] The two writers enjoyed each other's company. Whether they discovered that they had the innovative poet Xu Zhimo in common, each having once been his lover, must remain a matter of speculation.[86]

The dawning Cold War broke Smedley's Yaddo peace. The tone and substance of Winston Churchill's 1946 'iron curtain' speech appalled her. She despaired of an American polity that in 1948 rejected the progressive Henry Wallace's presidential run. She denounced American segregation and callous capitalism for their degrading of America. Unsurprisingly, she made no effort

to downplay her confidence in the CCP as China's civil war reignited: 'So far as I can see it, there is absolutely no force in Asia of any strength or vision capable of building a free world other than the Chinese Communists'.[87]

These notions, plus her association with dubious individuals in China, made Smedley an object of interest to the Federal Bureau of Investigation [FBI], Central Intelligence Agency, and Army intelligence. These agencies monitored her while they investigated her prior affiliations. Unluckily for Smedley, her name also surfaced in connection with an aborted plan, 'Tawny Pipet', devised in 1949 by Davies, then with the State Department's Policy Planning Staff. It looked to tap the expertise of various China hands – including John King Fairbank, Strong, and Snow – whilst the government determined whether the CCP might distant itself from Moscow 'a la Tito's Yugoslavia' and strike a *modus vivendi* with Washington. This initiative collapsed after muddle-headed security agents persuaded themselves that Davies wanted to infiltrate communist sympathisers into America's intelligence apparatus.[88] A whiff of suspicion based on supposed lesbian traits meanwhile wafted through FBI enquiries mentioning Smedley's 'mannish' appearance.[89] Eventually, the Army, through an intelligence officer, Major General Charles Willoughby, aired the findings of its investigations. These turned on Smedley's association with Sorge and Comintern intelligence operations in the 1930s. As reviewed above, these had concentrated on Japanese operations in China that possessed a demonstrable, or potential, anti-Soviet angle. They were not aimed against the security of the United States or detrimental to it. Yet Willoughby and his backers – significantly, General Douglas MacArthur – concluded with fanfare that Smedley's 'aim in life' had been 'to undermine the American conception of democracy'.[90]

Smedley's spirits fell as columnist Drew Pearson and Henry Luce publications pronounced her despicable. Hecklers dogged her public appearances. She informed Zhu De that a variant of fascism had overtaken the United States; she would soon be marched to jail.[91] Editors of the *New Republic* and the *Nation* dropped her from their lists of contributing writers.[92] Under pressure from self-styled Yaddo guardians, including the poet Robert Lowell, Yaddo's director forced Smedley to leave, lest her further presence stain their colony indelibly Red. This blacklisting, incidentally, continued after Smedley died on 6 May 1950. In 1953, the United States Information Agency removed *Daughter of Earth* and *Battle Hymn of China*, along with works of other proscribed authors, from the shelves of its overseas collections. Numerous Stateside libraries followed suit, a banning uncomfortably like German censors in the 1930s who had committed *Daughter of Earth* to piles of burning books.[93]

Smedley responded to the Army's 'crazy men', as she termed them, by threatening a libel lawsuit that in the event did not materialise as the Army retreated from its charges.[94] Following the Yaddo expulsion, she found

lodging, with Snow's assistance, in the village of Sneeden's Landing near New York City. But she could not live creatively amidst cascading derision; her writing about Zhe De languished. She consequently sought exile abroad, temporarily in Britain, then to the newly-established People's Republic of China [PRC], where in greater calm and proximity to her subject she should resume the Zhu researches. But she only got as far as Britain. Her physical health, once more precarious, required attention. Two days after stomach surgery in an Oxford infirmary, Smedley died from complications. Shortly afterwards, Snow wrote to Smedley's British hostess, Lady Hilda Selwyn-Clarke. Acquainted with Smedley since Hong Kong days, Selwyn-Clarke had tried to reassure her during her final weeks:

> I know that this must have been a very painful and difficult time for you and we are sure that you did everything possible for Agnes. One thing no one could do was to relieve her troubled spirit. Perhaps if she had got back to China earlier she might have lived longer, but I have my doubts about that, too. Anyway, she is now in the Valhalla where she said she longed to be, and able to listen to the stories of warriors who died for the revolution. Personally, I think she would get bored with that pretty quickly and would turn to setting things right up there where the old guard and its ruling saints have been in power entirely too long. At least by now she should certainly know just what is at the root of the trouble with the whole system and what needs to be changed.[95]

To a reading of Snow's note – whimsical, warm, astute – should be added these lines written by Smedley in her late thirties, when she tried to make sense of her experiences and imagined future death: 'I suppose I could not live a quiet life without dying from boredom. And it is undoubtedly true that I'll one day die on the barricades'. She qualified this romantic vision with an insight that encompassed her past and sensed what life lay ahead: 'It is romance only to those who see it from the outside. To me, who lived it, it has often meant unspeakable pain'.[96] During her final months, she allowed that her morale had 'wilted' and her faith in humanity's potential nearly expired: 'God of Gods, but the human animal is a savage!'[97]

In accordance with her final wishes, Smedley's cremated remains went to China; they came to rest at Beijing's Babaoshan Revolutionary Cemetery in May 1951. She also requested that United States government bonds due her and any outstanding royalties from publishers go to Zhu De. Whether he received anything of this bequest is doubtful. He did in any case compose the inscription and, in his own hand, form the Chinese characters embossed on Smedley's headstone. These honoured her as an 'American Revolutionary Writer and Friend of the Chinese People'.[98] By the time of Smedley's interment, Zhu commanded the People's Liberation Army. Large detachments – 'volunteers' – engaged in fighting in Korea against the United States and its United Nations partners. This war engendered Beijing-Washington bitterness until the 1970s when Americans recognised the PRC, allowed its admission to the United Nations, and suspended embargoes in favour of economic

normalisation. In a sense, this Sino-American breakthrough constituted belated fulfilment of Zhu's 1946 plea to Smedley for reciprocal striving: 'Believe in China and her people. Likewise, I [will] believe in the American people'.[99]

Had Smedley lived beyond the Korean War, say into the 1970s as a superannuated fellow traveller, her faith in the Chinese people would not have faltered. She could have refrained everlastingly words once spoken by Buck: 'By sympathy and feeling, I am Chinese'.[100] Yet Smedley, who never equated peoples with the regimes that ruled them, may well have turned away from Beijing. Mao's cult of personality, the man made famine with its millions of deaths in the Great Leap Forward, and the frenzied Cultural Revolution – which came close to injuring Zhu, as it victimised countless others – would have astonished her. As it was, her propensity to oppose authority and reluctance to bend had bothered the comrades in Yan'an, where they were more forgiving and less intolerant than in later times. Her subsequent irritability at the intellectual arrogance of some cadres and hints of displeasure with Mao must have confirmed that from a CCP standpoint, she never qualified as a good candidate for party membership.[101] Additionally, her relations with other communist parties were abysmal, notably the American Communist Party, whose head, Earl Browder, she dismissed as a non-entity.[102] Once enamoured of things Soviet, she disdained the Soviet communist party as of the 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop pact. None of this is to say that Smedley would have associated herself with these words of Buck when uttered in different context: 'I have seen enough of revolutions to know they accomplish nothing . . . . Revolution, so far as I have seen it, has been waste, and simply emotional release'.[103] Scenarios of the downtrodden peoples grandly triumphant entranced Smedley.[104] She believed to her end that stupendous undertakings were under way in China: 'the world will never be the same again . . . . my greatest hopes [are] realized'.[105] Luckily for her, she did not live long enough to witness those CCP revolutionaries in power, who destroyed their own, asserted the superfluity of 'undesirable' categories of people before liquidating them, and pulverised the country in catastrophic social-economic experiments pursuant to an illusory utopia.

Smedley could not exercise self-censorship or claim doctrinal certainty comparable to Anna Louise Strong, to whom she is often bracketed as an American woman dedicated to the people's emancipation. Resident in China during the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, Strong rarely whispered disquiet – even then hedged with equivocality and reference to extenuating circumstances – about totalitarianism or its cruelties.[106] Within a brief span of time, Strong in 1970 and Mao, Zhou, and Zhu in 1976 died from natural causes. Long in waiting, Smedley must have met them with tough questions after they entered the revolutionaries' Valhalla evoked by Snow. How these people would have explained themselves defies easy answer.

Equally hard to conjure is their response to post-Maoist generations of leaders or their actions. These have further disclosed totalitarianism's nature, iterated by the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre, suppression of dissenters, and 're-education' of massive numbers of Moslem Uighurs and Kazakhs in the Orwellian province of Xinjiang. Not difficult to summon is Smedley in her Valhalla, confronting leaders who claimed to rule in the name of China's common folk but were unmoored from this caution: 'It is not in keeping with the nobility of existence to keep other human beings in subjection'.[107]

Notes

1. Snow to Dear Howard, 7 December 1931, Snow [Edgar Snow Papers, University of Missouri, Kansas City, MO] File 3.
2. See Edgar Snow, *Red Star Over China* (NY, 1968 [1937]).
3. Anna Louis Strong, *One-Fifth of Mankind* (NY, 1938), 9.
4. Agnes Smedley, *China Fights Back: An American Woman with the Eighth Route Army* (NY, 1938), 236. Cf. Janice MacKinnon and Stephen MacKinnon. *Agnes Smedley: The Life and Times of an American Radical* (Berkeley, CA, 1988); Ruth Price, *The Lives of Agnes Smedley* (NY, 2005).
5. Agnes Smedley, *China Correspondent* (London, 1984 [*Battle Hymn of China* 1943]), 95.
6. Ibid., 349.
7. My thanks here to one of the anonymous assessors for suggestions on the 'inside-outside' idea.
8. Smedley, *China Correspondent*, 12.
9. James Bertram, *First Act in China: The Story of the Sian Mutiny* (NY, 1938), 217. Smedley explained: "I never believed that I myself was especially wise, but I could not become a mere instrument in the hands of men who believed that they held the one and only key to truth." She also could not shake what she identified as a "lifelong hostility to professional intellectuals." Smedley, *China Correspondent*, 14, 63.
10. Smedley to Dearest Florence, 30 March 1924, nd, 1926, both Smedley-MacKinnon [Smedley-MacKinnon Papers, Arizona State University, Phoenix, AZ] Box 1.
11. MacKinnon and MacKinnon, *Agnes Smedley*, 95.
12. Smedley, *China Correspondent*, 12.
13. Price, *Agnes Smedley*, 23; MacKinnon and MacKinnon, *Agnes Smedley*, 20.
14. Smedley, *China Correspondent*, 12.
15. Price, *Agnes Smedley*, 4, 191–92.
16. MacKinnon and MacKinnon, *Agnes Smedley*, 100. Smedley reported in 1926, "I have lived with a dozen men and have only reached the age of 34 and have another 30 years ahead of me." Smedley to Dearest Florence, nd, 1926, Smedley-MacKinnon Box 1.
17. Smedley, *China Correspondent*, 68; Price, *Agnes Smedley*, 83.
18. MacKinnon and MacKinnon, *Agnes Smedley*, 141.
19. Smedley to Dearest Florence, 17 June 1924, Smedley-MacKinnon Box 1; MacKinnon and MacKinnon, *Agnes Smedley*, 42–43.
20. Agnes Smedley, *Daughter of Earth* (Old Westbury, NY, 1973 [1929]), 35.
21. Smedley to Edgar and Lois Snow, 25 January 1950, Snow File 26; MacKinnon and MacKinnon, *Agnes Smedley*, 74; Price, *Agnes Smedley*, 2.
22. Smedley to Dearest Florence, 14 July 1929, Smedley-MacKinnon Box 1.
23. Smedley, *Daughter of Earth*, 328.

24 MacKinnon and MacKinnon, *Agnes Smedley*, 68–69.
25 Smedley, *China Correspondent*, 15.
26 Jan MacKinnon and Steve MacKinnon, eds., *Portraits of Chinese Women in Revolution by Agnes Smedley* (Old Westbury, NY, 1976), xiii–xiv; Price, *Agnes Smedley*, 104, 109–11.
27 Smedley to Dearest Florence, 17 June 1924, Smedley-MacKinnon Box 1.
28 Smedley, *China Correspondent*, 19.
29 Smedley to Dearest Florence, nd, 1926, Smedley-MacKinnon Box 1. Chattopadhyaya was executed – apparently in 1937 – in Soviet Russia during the Great Purges.
30 Smedley, *China Correspondent*, 246; MacKinnon and MacKinnon, *Agnes Smedley*, 135.
31 Philip Jaffe, "Agnes Smedley: A Reminiscence," *Survey*, 20 (Autumn 1974), 178.
32 MacKinnon and MacKinnon, *Agnes Smedley*, 146–48. For a detailed treatment of Smedley's service to Comintern intelligence, see Price, *Agnes Smedley*, 160–61, 170–235, 236–79, 357, 375; Charles Willoughby, *Shanghai Conspiracy: The Sorge Spy Ring* (NY, 1952). On Smedley and Ozaki, see Ayako Ishigaki, "Agnes Smedley as I Know Her," 1967, 4, Snow File 26.
33 Robert Farnsworth, *From Vagabond to Journalist: Edgar Snow in Asia 1928–1941* (Columbia, MO, 1996), 267; Agnes Smedley, "Chiang Kai-shek's Arrest," 14 December 1936, Wales [Nym Wales Papers, Hoover Institution, Stanford, CA] Box 18.
34 Bertram, *First Act in China*, 170–73; Price, *Agnes Smedley*, 288–89; MacKinnon and MacKinnon, *Agnes Smedley*, 176–77.
35 Smedley, *China Correspondent*, 60.
36 See Agnes Smedley, *Chinese Destinies: Sketches of Present-Day China* (NY, 1933); idem., *China's Red Army Marches* (NY, 1934).
37 Smedley to Snow, 19 April 1937, Snow File 11.
38 "I Am American," extract *San Diego Sun* (22 May 1937), Smedley-MacKinnon Box 5.
39 Smedley to Snow, 19 April 1937, Snow File 11.
40 Agnes Smedley, *The Great Road: The Life and Times of Chu Teh* (NY, 1956), 3.
41 Smedley to Snow, 19 April 1937, Snow File 11.
42 But for the persistence of Snow, an executor of Smedley's will, the Zhu De manuscript would not have been published. Earlier, during Smedley's life, Snow read portions of the manuscript and supplied critique. See Snow to Smedley, 16 August 1949, Snow File 26. Regarding the manuscript, also see John Maxwell Hamilton, *Edgar Snow: A Biography* (Bloomington, IN, 1988), 198. My thanks also to one of the assessors for language and this perspective, "Smedley's writing [is] rather more interesting than just realistic reportage."
43 Smedley to Snow, 19 April 1937, Snow File 11; MacKinnon and MacKinnon, *Agnes Smedley*, 187–88; Price, *Agnes Smedley*, 312–15.
44 Rewi Alley, *Six Americans in China* (Beijing, 1985), 145; Farnsworth, *Vagabond to Journalist*, 290–92; Edgar Porter, *The People's Doctor: George Hatem and China's Revolution* (Honolulu, HI, 1997), 103–12; MacKinnon and MacKinnon, *Agnes Smedley*, 189–92; Price, *Agnes Smedley*, 315–17.
45 Smedley to Dear Mr. Nehru, 23 November 1937 in Jawaharlal Nehru, ed., *A Bunch of Old Letters* (Delhi, 1988 [1958]), 260.
46 Smedley, *China Fights Back*, 248–49.
47 Lecture notes, 7–8, nd [internal evidence suggests second half of 1941], Smedley [Agnes Smedley Papers, Arizona State University, Phoenix, AZ] Box 7.
48 Smedley, *China Fights Back*, 171–72, 180–81.
49 Ibid., 18.
50 Ibid., 112. Also on the onlooker-theme, see Ibid., 148.

51 Ibid., 66, 250, 263–64.
52 Ibid., 263–64.
53 Stephen MacKinnon, *Wuhan, 1938: War, Refugees, and the Making of Modern China* (Berkeley, CA, 2008) 1–2.
54 W.H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood, *Journey to a War* (London, 1939). 50.
55 Donald Gillies, *Radical Diplomat: The Life of Archibald Clark Kerr, Lord Inverchapel, 1882–1951* (London, 1999), 95.
56 See Evans Carlson, *Twin Stars of China* (NY, 1940), 270–71; MacKinnon, *Wuhan 1938*, 103–04.
57 Davies found Smedley 'softhearted' and later reminisced of her Hankou deportment: '[She] loved to wear an Eighth Route Army uniform because she wished she were an Eighth Route Army soldier – also because she was a militant women's rightser and because she enjoyed shocking the stodgy. The getup was a slumped fatigue cap pulled down to her ears over her lank bobbed hair, a wrinkled cotton tunic and trousers, neatly wound cotton puttees, and cloth shoes . . . [this ensemble] was aggressively unbecoming.' See John Paton Davies, *Dragon by the Tail: American, British, Japanese, and Russian Encounters with China and One Another* (NY, 1972), 195–96. For similar depiction, see idem., *China Hand: An Autobiography* (Philadelphia, PA, 2012), 27–29.
58 Stilwell to his wife, nd, cited in Smedley Memorial Meeting of 18 May 1950, Smedley-MacKinnon Box 1.
59 MacKinnon and MacKinnon, *Agnes Smedley*, 207. The Utley Papers housed at the Hoover Institution contain little on Smedley-Utley interactions. The main item contains a long report (nd) by Smedley on military-political events in North China in the late 1930s.
60 MacKinnon, *Wuhan*, 1938, 108; MacKinnon and MacKinnon, *Agnes Smedley*, 203–04.
61 Roderick Stewart and Sharon Stewart, *Phoenix: The Life of Norman Bethune* (Montreal, Kingston, 2011), 370, 451n53.
62 MacKinnon and MacKinnon, *Agnes Smedley*, 212.
63 Smedley to Dear Elinor, 7 March 1939, Smedley-MacKinnon Box 1.
64 University of Chicago speech, nd or title indicated, delivered in 1941, Smedley Box 5.
65 Lecture notes, nd [circa 1946], Smedley Box 5/6.
66 Smedley to My dear Anna, 5 February 1947, Smedley-MacKinnon Box 1.
67 Smedley, *China Correspondent*, 339.
68 Ibid., 167.
69 Untitled Speech in the Los Angeles Philharmonic Auditorium, 22 October 1941 (also 5 November 1941 at Occidental College), 1, Smedley Box 3.
70 Ibid., 1–2.
71 For fuller accounts, see "My Chinese Son" in Smedley, *China Correspondent*, 321–29; Price, *Agnes Smedley*, 338–41.
72 Evans Carlson, "She Lived the War with China's Red Fighters: The Passionate Story of A Courageous American Woman," *Weekly Book Review, New York Herald Tribune* (5 September 1943).
73 MacKinnon and MacKinnon, *Agnes Smedley*, 227.
74 Smedley, *China Correspondent*, 361.
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77 Ibid., 351; MacKinnon and MacKinnon, *Agnes Smedley*, 229.
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