

Signor Mussolini and Herr Hitler, Mr. Roosevelt challenged the dictators to maintain peace in Europe for ten years to come. But Mussolini refused to say anything, while Hitler spoke with the set intention to side-track or evade the issue. Now the whole question remains: "How to make the small nations of Europe safe from Fascist attack?"

The paradox of the world situation today is just this: While war is unthinkable, every leading Power is preparing for war. Or, to put it in another way, while every nation fears war, no nation is willing to combat war. So, another world war seems inevitable. But when we stop to think of its dire consequences, why cannot leading powers work together to prevent its coming? Is the price of war prevention too great for the maintenance of world peace? Really, could the price of war prevention be greater than the loss of human lives and the ruin of human civilization? Had Great Britain and France, in cooperation with other member or non-member States of the League, applied economic sanctions against Japan in 1931, there would have been no Italo-Abyssinian war, Sino-Japanese war or any other aggressive plans of the Berlin-Rome-Tokyo Axis. But Britain did not at that time believe in international co-operation for world peace. She was not even willing to apply economic sanctions against aggressor nations as an effective way to prevent war. She preferred to handle the situation alone with the hope of keeping the Empire safe—even, if necessary, at the expense of other small nations. But the far-flung empire of Great Britain cannot be made safe that way. This is just a matter of common sense!

Japan's aggressive attack on China is threatening to

wipe out British interests in Chinese territory and upset the balance of power in the Far East. With her hands now full in Europe, Great Britain could not handle Japan in China so easily as in 1931. But who else is to blame? Great Britain's smart diplomacy has been "out-smarted" by Japan's armed force. And, needless to add, there is no bargaining between diplomacy and force! There is but one road open. Great Britain and France should do every thing within their power to secure the full support of the United States and Soviet Russia. The united front of the four democratic Powers would at least give the Fascist axis Powers plenty of food for thought. At the same time, Great Britain should continue her cooperation with China politically and economically. China's dogged determination to resist the invaders for the past two years well deserves the co-operation and encouragement of all leading Powers. Such international co-operation and encouragement are now sorely needed, as the tide of the current war is rapidly turning against the invading forces. Europe and Asia are no longer two independent continents. The Sino-Japanese war has affected Great Britain (and any other European Power, for that matter) as much as it has affected either China or Japan.

In short, war in Europe should be prevented by all means, and the Sino-Japanese war must be stopped in the name of international justice at the earliest possible opportunity. Upon the foreign policy of the Chamberlain Government depends the fate of Europe as well as the duration of the Sino-Japanese war. Will Great Britain be willing to pay the price to avert war in Europe and to salvage her interests in the Far East?

Pearl Buck's First Nobel Effort

By GEORGE KAO

IT was said that those who were on hand to watch the King of Sweden hand Pearl Buck the Nobel Prize held their collective breath as the author backed across the hall, her long train and all, and up a flight of steps—with the greatest of ease. If the reading world has looked forward with as much anxiety to Mrs. Buck's first novel since she was accorded the world's highest literary honor it did not have to wait long to be gratified with an equal sense of relief. For "The Patriot", coming two months after the Stockholm ceremony, is a welcome addition to "The Good Earth" tradition.

What is pleasant about "The Patriot" is that it marks not only the author's debut as Nobel Prizewinner but also her return to the Chinese scene. It is, as John Day advertises, her "first novel with an Oriental setting in four years." Strictly speaking, Mrs. Buck's complete divorcement from China did not come until 1938, when she published "an American novel" called "This Proud Heart"; and critics have insisted unanimously that that brief excursion into the United States was comparatively disastrous. The Nobel award and the appearance of her latest work gave these first readers a chance to agree equally vehemently that "The Good Earth" is still the best of Buck, with "The

Patriot" a worthy successor, and that, after all, China is her forte.

It is not merely that Pearl Buck draws her inspiration and subject matter from the land in which she was brought up. In a larger and deeper sense, her talents are rooted therein and her fortunes as a writer seem to be bound up with the good earth. Her first successful novel did more than establish a new star in the American literary firmament; it also brought the Western world for the first time to an appreciation of the real China and started a cycle of American book and magazine-writing on China, which for its accurate reporting, shrewd appraisal and sympathetic understanding, has not been excelled in any other language.

The fact that what adverse comments there were on "The Good Earth" came, ungraciously enough, from the Chinese themselves appears today nothing but a sign of mild irritation, not unmixed with envy, that one's own country should have been best introduced to the world and gained the widest recognition through somebody else's eyes in a foreign tongue. As the outlines of a new China became more definitive and as Mrs. Buck's status as writer *per se* became so well accepted that she was beginning to venture into other countries than her "own", there came again with the war the tragic, imponderable China, a more

burning issue than ever. The net result of this is the crowning glory to Pearl Buck in the Nobel award and a simultaneous, in fact anticipatory, re-awakening of interest on her part in China, as manifested in her current articles, speeches, and in "The Patriot."

Many a commentator has pointed out that the Nobel Prize for 1938 was given in recognition of "The Good Earth" in particular. It is also the general belief that the excruciating experience of China under invasion, so much a part of the world's feelings last year, had much to do with the opportune decision of the august body in Stockholm. Without trying to dilute Mrs. Buck's richly deserved success, it seems one way of summarizing the situation would be for the people of Chingkiang, Kiangsu Province, if they could but know, to come out and cheer for Mrs. Buck a rousing "Hometown girl made good!" Somehow or other, the sense of reflected glory and vicarious thrill usually attendant upon announcement of so great an award as the Nobel Prize seems, in the case of Pearl Buck, more naturally shared by the Chinese than the average American.

The story of "The Patriot" has been often retailed in book reviewer's columns. It is, as one of my American friends puts it, the familiar theme of the German soldier and the French girl. Wu I-wan, a young Chinese "revolutionist" exiled in Japan, takes a Japanese wife and eventually leaves her to return and fight for China. The background extends from the much-romanticized 1927 "betrayal" in Shanghai (André Malraux, Vincent Sheean, *et al*) to the equally well-publicized ex-Communist heroes in Yen-an today (Red Star Over China, Inside Red China, etc.). What happens in between is indeed fresh from your newspaper headlines, with not a single historical footnote, no matter how casually thrown in, but capable of being traced to some glaring event in the last turbulent decade of China's national life.

With a returned-missionary's grasp of things Chinese and a magazine-editor's familiarity with current events, the author has produced a dramatized and personalized history which is as authentic and complete as one could wish. From the standpoint of story, however, "The Patriot" errs on the side of being too compact, well-organized and inclusive. Structurally, the story falls so neatly into three parts—China, Japan, China—that it reads, if one does not lose himself in admiration of details, almost like a simple music composition of the sonata-form.

But it is impossible for a Chinese reader not to catch the author's many details of description and character-sketch, nor let his heart be warmed with nostalgia for the scenes and faces, pointed to with such quick understanding, of pre-war China. This compensates for us the essential simplicity of story and weaves some varicolored threads around the otherwise rather bare pattern of the plot. It is just imaginable that the average reader who has not known China first-hand is not to be expected to feel what complexities lie behind such an institution as the Chinese-furnished Western-styled house in the French Concession of Shanghai, or such a personage as the foreign lady-teacher in a missionary-founded college for Chinese.

The American reader quite naturally would look for

satisfaction in Mrs. Buck's chief characters, and here many have expressed mild discontent. The author has an almost infallible sense of story-telling, employing just so many words to detail an episode, just so many incidents to round out the story, and no more. You don't feel for any of the characters as you might, for instance, in a longer and more formless novel, or if the author had chosen to lose herself in at least one of her people and care less about the story as an organic whole.

But here again the Chinese has his advantage. For reading "The Patriot" is like reading for the first time some famous novel the movie version of which you have already seen: the temptation is great for you to rest the ears of your imagination and just think of the face of your favorite movie star to help conjure the image of each character. Since Mrs. Buck's novel is living and pulsating China, lifted with thin fictionalized disguise out of current history, we would tend to look for any possible real-life persons after whom the author may have modeled her characters. Remembering the individual-lover *vs.* national-enemy theme, the patriot himself assumes immediately the name of Kuo Mo-jo, author, revolutionist, who, needless to say, lived in Japan for ten years since 1927, only to have to forsake his Japanese wife and children after the Lukow-chiao outbreak, when he felt it his duty to return and serve his country against Japanese aggression.

Whether or not this identification is justifiable, it lends verisimilitude to "The Patriot" and its other characters. Liu En-lan, Mrs. Buck's student-turned-Communist, could be any one of the group once referred to deprecatingly by foreign correspondents as the "Kiangsu-Chekiang bankers"; Peony could be the wife of Chu Teh, who is said also to have risen from bondage to guerrilla heroine. And my countrymen will agree with me how many I-kos and Tse-lis we have among the leisure class of Shanghai and, like me, they probably could name a few right off among the *ta shao yeh* and pseudo-poets they used to know.

Of course, Mrs. Buck will not claim conscious writing into her story of any real-life figure (except when presenting the Generalissimo and Madame Chiang as themselves, and then with compelling dignity). She is here, as in all her former novels, dealing with types rather than persons, with what could have happened rather than what actually took place. This is, doubtless, more true with the part of the book which is laid in Japan. For me, without intimate knowledge of Japan, even as my American friends are unfamiliar with China, what Part II of "The Patriot" loses in richness and flavor, it gains in greater charm and simplicity.

Tales of war are hard to tell when bombs are still being dropped and people continue to be killed. For every day you get in the newspaper stronger stuff than that which goes into the make-up of most fiction. It is only through her knowledge of the situation and honesty as an artist that Pearl Buck has succeeded in making an intensely human story out of the elements of some of the most inhuman forces of our day. And, literary giant that she is, she gains strength with her stories, every time she returns to the good earth.