

THE ATRIOT

by Pearl S. Buck

THE PATRIOT

By Pearl S. Buck

THE PATRIOT
THIS PROUD HEART
•
FIGHTING ANGEL
THE EXILE
A HOUSE DIVIDED
THE MOTHER
THE FIRST WIFE AND OTHER STORIES
SONS
THE GOOD EARTH
EAST WIND: WEST WIND
*
ALL MEN ARE BROTHERS
[SHUI HU CHUAN]
TRANSLATED FROM THE CHINESE

PART ONE

I

THERE lived in the city of Shanghai in the fifteenth year of the Chinese Republic and in the western year nineteen hundred and twenty-six, a rich banker whose surname was Wu, who had two sons. His family for several generations had been wealthy, and for at least three had been known in the life of the city, although in differing ways. Mr. Wu held the family's present position because he was the head of the Great China Bank, which had branches all through central and southern China. He had as a young man gone abroad to Japan and to Europe to visit banks, and upon his return he had at once begun to build the bank which later became so powerful in the new republic.

But his father, old General Wu, had nothing to do with banks except, as a military man, to look at them hopefully in times of the war in which nevertheless he never fought. General Wu, in his youth during the late Manchu dynasty, had been sent abroad, not by his parents, who were indeed filled with terror at the idea that his mother wept and refused food until he was allowed, by special imperial decree, to delay his going long enough to give her a grandson. Only when a red and crying child, now Mr. Wu the banker, was placed in her old arms immediately after his birth, did she allow General Wu, then an impetuous and handsome lad of eighteen, to go abroad. He was sent with several other young men, by the Emperor, during the brief years when it seemed that the dynasty would reform its old and obsolete army.

But the reforms were never made. All the world knows that the strong and powerful Empress Dowager overruled her weak son, and put down his reforms, and General Wu found himself without money after less than two years in Berlin. His father sent him enough to come home, and it was at that time that the young officer perceived the importance of banks. Bankers, he decided, were the men who ruled nations, not emperors or kings, and he made up his mind forthwith that his two-year-old son should become a banker.

And he was able to do as he had decided. Before his ship reached the docks of Shanghai, his old father had died, and his mother, unable to linger after, killed herself by swallowing her jade and gold rings. General Wu, therefore, found himself at the head of the Wu family, since he was the only son, and its huge fortunes were his, as well as the ancestral houses and lands, which were not in Shanghai but far away in the inner province of Hunan.

The money was stored in curious places. Old Mr. Wu, deceased, had never understood or trusted banks. He looked upon them as a purely foreign scheme for extortion. His large sums of cash were therefore in the shape of silver shoes, which he kept in boxes under his own roof. General Wu's first act was to deposit all these silver shoes in the vaults of various banks. His next was to use many of them in the building of a great square brick house in the French section of Shanghai, which was then the fashionable place to live. He hired a young French architect to build the house, and also to have it furnished. When it stood completed he moved his family into it, though it looked like a wealthy house in Paris and was not in the least Chinese. When his wife complained of its discomforts, such for instance as the thick carpets which meant that nothing could be dropped upon the floors, he reminded her that thousands of women in foreign

countries had to put up with such discomforts. Thereafter he paid no attention to her. He lived in the house peacefully enough for forty years, while his eldest son grew up and became a banker and his other sons were born and grew up and went their ways. His daughters he never included in the number of his children, although he performed his duty and married them to well-to-do men, and having done his duty, ceased to think of them further. His eldest son continued to live with him and his aging wife in the large French house, and at the proper time was married to a well-educated young Shanghai lady, and by her he had his two sons, I-ko and I-wan.

Old General Wu was perfectly satisfied when these two grandsons were born. He had lived a peaceful life and had never been in a war nor seen a battle. But he was called General because the Emperor, long dead, had sent him to a German military school, and also because of his great wealth. Moreover, he possessed several uniforms, which he had ordered a Shanghai tailor to copy for him from the uniforms of an English general, an American Admiral, and a French marshal when these officers visited Shanghai at various times and inspected the troops of their countries stationed there. Old General Wu was a handsome figure in any one of the uniforms, though the one he wore most often was a combination of them made after his own design, with an added touch of the Russian cossack. He did not, of course, wear these uniforms at home. There he wore soft old robes of heavy brocaded silks and satins and on his feet velvet shoes. But the uniforms hung in his closet and were brushed by a manservant at every change of season, when also all his medals, some of which he had bought and some of which had been presented to him by different persons who wanted money, were polished and put away again.

In this house I-ko and I-wan grew to young manhood with

fair happiness, their chief trouble being only in the difference of their two natures. For I-wan had always been the favorite with the whole household, grandparents, parents, and servants. I-ko, the elder, was a pouting child, easily spoiled, who turned, it seemed naturally, to mischief and malice. But I-wan was cheerful and tender, and the same indulgence which had been so ruinous to I-ko seemed not to hurt him at all. He had reached his eighteenth year and had got into only one difficulty, which he had never had to explain to his grandparents and parents because they knew nothing about it. He had been arrested and put in jail. It is true that he remained there only one night. As soon as it became known whose son he was, the head jailer himself rushed into his cell, the sweat pouring down his face.

"Sir, forgive me for being a fool," he cried to I-wan, who was sitting on three bricks piled one on top of the other in a corner of a crowded and filthy cell. "But why didn't you tell me, sir, that your father is Mr. Wu, the banker, and your grandfather the old General?"

"If I deserve to go to jail, I deserve to go to jail," I-wan replied with majesty.

He was the only one among the prisoners who wore a silk robe, and the ends were dragged with filth. A young man who was in the cell with him had asked him scornfully, "Why don't you tuck up your wonderful robe?" He was a rough-looking young man in a government-school uniform of cheap blue cotton. I-wan himself went to a private school kept by missionaries for the sons of rich men. There they wore no uniforms, but always silk robes.

"Because I have better ones," I-wan had replied.

It was at this moment that the jailer came in. When he heard what I-wan said, his face fell into still more alarm.

"Don't be angry with me, young lord!" he begged. "Why, your

father could have me thrown out of this pleasant jail if he liked! I am a poor man. Come out and I will hire a horse carriage and have you returned to your father unharmed. And when you reach home, plead for me, young sir, I beg you!"

I-wan would have liked to refuse proudly. But he was only eighteen and he was tired and hungry, and the cell was foul. His cellmates, moreover, were a sullen and dirty-looking group of men of different sorts and ages, and of them all only the young student in the uniform seemed good. He rose, therefore, but with dignity, and went out.

But as the frightened jailer was about to lock the iron gate again I-wan paused.

"Wait!" he commanded. "Let that student come out, also."

"That I cannot," the jailer said. "He is a revolutionist."

"So am I," I-wan declared.

It was true that he had been arrested in the foreign school as a revolutionist. Soldiers had come in and searched them as they searched all students anywhere they found them. I-wan had been walking alone and as it happened reading a book then very popular among all the students and written by a German named Karl Marx. Since he had always done as he liked, he made no secret of it when the soldiers demanded what he was reading.

"Karl Marx," he said, scornfully, for what did soldiers know?

But to his amazement they had at once arrested him and dragged him to prison and thrown him into the cell, where he had raged all night long, at first aloud, until the other prisoners had snarled at him to be quiet so they could sleep.

"The son of the great banker Wu could never be a revolutionist," the jailer now declared.

But I-wan stamped his foot.

"I will certainly see that you lose your job!" he shouted.

The little jailer turned a paler yellow.

"But how shall I explain?" he wailed.

"Say I commanded it," I-wan said. "Say that I personally am responsible."

While this was going on the young man came and stood at the door, his square strong face unmoved, but his eyes brilliant and watchful.

"Oh heaven!" the jailer wailed. "Oh mercy!"

But I-wan snatched the keys from his hand and himself opened the gate while the jailer moaned and pulled his own hair.

"You can say you know nothing about it," I-wan said, and held the door with his body and his foot only wide enough for the young man, who came out at once and stood waiting. Then I-wan locked the gate again and gave the key back to the jailer, and he touched the young man on the arm and they walked away together, while behind them the dirty and cowed faces of the prisoners pressed against the bars.

The two young men did not speak until they had climbed into the old horse carriage which the jailer called.

"I hope, sir," he begged of I-wan, "that you will remember my plight if I am asked—"

"Let me know," I-wan said curtly, and gave the horse driver the number of his father's house.

They were already in the carriage, but at this the young man turned to him.

"You must know I cannot go there."

"Why not?" I-wan asked.

"I am really a revolutionist," the young man declared, smiling curiously.

"Are you?" I-wan asked. "But I have always wanted to find one."

"There are plenty of us in the university," the young man said lightly. And then before I-wan could stop him, he had leaped

from the low slowly-moving carriage. "My name," he said quickly, "is Liu En-lan, and I thank you for freedom." He ran then into the crowd before I-wan could lay hold upon him, but he turned once, smiled a wide bright smile, and was gone. There was nothing for I-wan to do but to go home.

When he entered the house he found he had not even been missed. Often he came in late when he went to the theatre, which was his usual amusement place since he was especially fond of plays about the heroes of ancient times, such as one found in stories of good robbers, who robbed the rich and gave to the poor. Two or three times a week he went to these plays and came home near dawn and opened the door with his own key.

And in this house everyone slept late. Day after day he rose and ate his breakfast alone and went to school, having seen no one except servants. Now he went upstairs to his own room. It was exactly as it had always been. He went to the bed and tossed it as though he had slept in it. Then he took off his clothes, bathed himself and put on over his white silk undergarments a plain robe of blue silk. He had scarcely done this before there was a cough at the door, it opened, and his mother's bondmaid, Peony, came in with tea as she did every morning.

"I am late," she said hurriedly when she saw him already dressed. "I overslept myself."

"It doesn't matter," he replied. "I am not going any more to that foreign school."

"What now?" she asked, surprised, setting down the tray.

"I am going to the public university," he announced.

"But that school!" she cried. "Anybody can go to it!"

"Therefore I can go," he declared.

"Your father won't let you," Peony retorted, "nor your grandfather."

"Then I won't eat," I-wan said with energy.

"Which means," she said mischievously, "I must carry food in here under my coat as I have before when you wanted something. Shame, I-wan! It's I-ko's trick!"

They both laughed.

But that was how I-wan came to go to the National University, and how he came to know the revolutionists and to become one of them. For, surely enough, as soon as he stopped eating, his mother flew to his father and his grandmother assailed his grandfather, and within fewer than four days he was wearing a uniform exactly like the one Liu En-lan wore, except that his mother insisted that it be made of the best English broadcloth and cut by his grandfather's tailor. On this I-wan yielded, since after all it was but a small compromise and it gave his parents and grandparents some feeling of satisfaction in their authority. "At least," they said, examining the new uniform when he put it on, "it is very becoming to him."

"Come here," his grandmother cried, "let me feel your cheeks!"

And still for compromise he bent and let her feel his cheeks with her dry old hands.

"Little meat dumpling!" she murmured.

And he endured this, too, because, after all, he had what he really wanted.

Two years later, in this fifteenth year of the republic, I-wan, without anyone of his family dreaming such a thing could be, had become one of those revolutionists whose secret groups met in every school in China. He lived two wholly separate lives, his old life as the younger son in a rich house, and this other life as a passionate young man among other such young men, dreaming of overthrowing the new republic and setting up a still newer one, since they were as rebellious against the republic as their fathers had been against the throne. Neither life had anything to

do with the other. None of his schoolmates had even seen the big square house where he lived, until one day in early autumn, he stopped on his way from school at a sweet-shop near his home. When he came out again someone passed him and called his name. It was Peng Liu, one of the band of revolutionists, and the only one he did not like, though Peng Liu was of no importance. He was the son of a small shopkeeper in the city, a small mean-looking fellow with narrow eyes and a loose mouth through which he perpetually breathed with a foul breath. No one liked him, though these things, after all, he could not help.

"I-wan!" Peng Liu called. "Where are you going?"

"Home," I-wan replied, and wished he had thought of a lie, because now Peng Liu sauntered along with him and there was nothing to do with him until they reached the big house. He made up his mind, however, that he would not ask Peng Liu to come in. Peng Liu would never understand why, though a revolutionist, he lived in this house, and he would not like him the better for seeing its luxuries. Besides, why was Peng Liu here at all? His home was far away in the Chinese part of the city. Had Peng Liu purposely followed him?

He stopped at the gate and shifted his school books. He looked about him quickly and then he glanced at the windows of the house to see if I-ko might be there watching him. He did not want I-ko to see Peng Liu. He would immediately suspect Peng Liu's poor garments and meager, sickly face. But there was no one at the windows, and there were few people loitering in the hot sunshine of an early September afternoon in Shanghai. So he said in a low clear voice, "Until tomorrow, comrade!"

"Until tomorrow," Peng Liu said quickly.

"Coward!" I-wan thought with scorn. "He is afraid to say comrade even when no one is near."

But Peng Liu lingered. "Is this where you live?" he asked

with wonder. He looked up at the huge square brick house with columned porticos.

"I can't help it," I-wan said. "My grandfather built it and my father lives with him, and naturally as yet I live with my father."

"It's a fine foreign house," Peng Liu said.

But I-wan despised the humility in his voice. He thought, "Peng Liu would like to come in, but I won't ask him. Besides, I-ko would despise him."

"Good-by," he repeated aloud.

"Good-by," Peng Liu replied.

I-wan turned away sharply and ran up the marble steps and let himself quietly into the house. But he could not be quiet enough for his grandmother when she was not drowsy with opium. And because she loved him so well she tried every day not to be drowsy when he came home from school.

He was late today because of a secret meeting and because after it he had been hungry and stopped at the sweet-shop and that was why her voice was impatient when she called, "I-wan, come here! Where have you been?"

At that moment Peony came out of his grandmother's room and took his books and his hat. She framed her soft red lips into voiceless words.

"She is very cross!"

He shrugged and frowned.

"Coming, Grandmother!" he answered. "Has I-ko come home?" he asked Peony. He waited until he saw her shake her head, and then went into his grandmother's room.

Every day since he was six years old and starting school he had to come straight to his grandmother as soon as he reached home, and every day he hated it more. He was sullen whenever he thought of it, that this old woman was waiting for him and

that he must come to her. In their secret meetings when they talked of throwing off family bondage, he had sprung to his feet and shouted, "Until we are free of our families we can never accomplish anything!" He was thinking of his own family, but especially of his grandmother.

"Here I am, Grandmother," he said sulkily.

But she never noticed his sulkiness. She was sitting on the edge of the big, square couch. The lamp and pipe were ready for her use. She had only been waiting for him.

"Come here," she said. So he went a little nearer. "Come here, so I can feel you," she insisted.

He had to go near her, though this was what he hated most. She put out her thin long-nailed hand and took his hand in both of hers.

"Your palms are wet!" she exclaimed.

"It is very hot outside," he said.

"You've been hurrying," she scolded. "How often have I told you never to hurry? It destroys the life force."

"I like to walk quickly," he declared.

"It is not what you like," she said. "You have to consider the family. You are my grandson."

No, this was what he hated most of all, this sense that to her he was valuable only because he was her grandson, a person to carry on her family.

"I must sometimes do what I like," he said sullenly.

She gripped his wrist suddenly between her thumb and forefinger.

"You are always doing what you like," she said loudly. "You think of no one but yourself—it is this generation! I-ko is the same. He has not come near me all day."

Then immediately she was afraid she had made him angry,