



The Betty Letters

My Dear Grandchild,

I have, always, admired courage and honour and so I was especially interested to learn, recently, of the resignation of Military Intelligence Chief of the Philippine Army, Victor Corpus. Well done, Victor! He resigned his commission from the army, following the unsuccessful coup d'etat of some three hundred disgruntled soldiers, who wanted to overthrow the Government of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. Mr Victor Corpus accepted sole responsibility for his, and his department's, incompetence in not knowing of the attempted coup. He and his department should have known because the coup was so well organised, right down to the rebel soldiers, having produced unique armbands with the logo of their new rising sun, signifying a new day and a new order of things. The maxim in World War II for the Imperial Japanese Army was: Death before Dishonour! In the case of Mr Victor Corpus, he showed the world of the metal from which he was cast. Of course, today, the practice of ritual suicide, known as hari-kari, or seppuku, is not looked upon too favourably, but I, personally, have always held such practices in the highest esteem because, to me, it meant honour – and the courage to aspire to the highest level of honour. It is a pity, really, that some of the Ministers of Hongkong do not have the courage of the old-time, Japanese samurai. When, on July 1, some five hundred thousand Hongkong residents meandered through the streets of Hongkong Island, wearing similar-coloured T-shirts, all carrying little bottles of water in order to quench their thirst on that hot Monday, and giving assistance to the old, the infirm, and the young, it should have been clear to anybody and everybody that the demonstration of those people had been well organised. And, yet, nobody in my Government has accepted responsibility for the lack of knowledge of that demonstration! You may think, my dear: Whose turn is it to practise political self-immolation? Nobody has come forward. Where is Hongkong's 'Victor Corpus'? You may well ask. How can a man or woman live, knowing of his or her abject failure? To have tried and failed is poor, of course, but to have failed to try is completely unacceptable. I talked to Grandpa about this, but all that that poor dear would say was that the water of life flows from high to low, in the words of Confucius. Of course, I know how water flows, but what of the water of courage and honour: How does that flow?

Since those horrible days in the first week of July, there have been meetings upon meetings upon meetings. Grandpa has had to meet all kinds of people, from the would-be Hongkong aristocracy, to the Hongkong democratic riff-raffs. He had to do that in order to try to show that he was trying to repair political fences. He had to swallow his pride for the sake of Beijing. It was not easy, I can tell you. He even had to talk to the shallow people. It was difficult for him, you understand, but he has courage and he has honour – and, in any event, he is under orders from Beijing. He even had to have a meeting with Mr James Tien, the Leader of the Liberal Party, the man who betrayed him in his hour of need on July 6. Without the Liberal Party's support, officially, it would be difficult to muster a sufficient number of votes in the Legislative Council to push through any difficult new Government laws. So, there you have it: For the sake of Beijing, Hongkong, and honour, in that order, Grandpa had to swallow the bitter taste of Chinese medicine. Mr James Tien is reported to have told the Hongkong Press that, following his meeting with Grandpa, all is forgiven. It would have been far more accurate to state that, following Mr Tien's meeting with Grandpa, the tapes of that meeting were sealed in Grandpa's desk drawer for

future consideration and potential action. If Mr James Tien, really, felt that there had been a terrible conflict between his duty to the Government of Hongkong and his duty to the Liberal Party, he had an honourable path to follow in order to extricate himself from the conundrum – in the manner of the samurai. But, it is clear that Mr James Tien does not have the courage of Japanese knights of old.

Then, we come to the matter of Mr Antony Leung, the former Financial Secretary. The moment that he knew that the game was up, for what reason did he not do the honourable thing: Resign on the spot? He, then, could have, gracefully, gone around the back of the house, in which he was living on The Peak, and taken care of matters ... if he had the courage so to do. But his staying on in office, after he was found with his fingers in the cookie jar, so to speak, only exacerbated the terrible situation. Grandpa was like the proverbial deaf-and-dumb man, who is unable to explain that he has, inadvertently, swallowed the most bitter of all things imaginable and, now, he cannot continue to tolerate the horrid taste. Grandpa may never recover from that ordeal, you know, so much was the shock to his system. At least, Ms Regina Ip, former Secretary for Security, had the good sense to resign from office in good time. All in all, she is a credit to her sex: She tried very hard to do her duty, in accordance with instructions, handed down from on high; she never wavered for one minute. It seems that the only people with any courage and honour, these days, are we, females, as distinct from she-males and hermaphrodites.

Take another for instance, the matter of Dr E. K. Yeoh, Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food, and his botched tackling in the matter of the outbreak of SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) in Hongkong. On Day One, in the morning, he said that SARS had not spread, widely. By that same afternoon, a professor from The Chinese University of Hongkong disputed Dr Yeoh's statement, claiming that, in fact, SARS had infected a number of communities. That professor was correct; Dr Yeoh was wrong. Yet, Dr Yeoh, still, holds his Ministerial position! Why? Where is his honour? Where is his courage? A learned man should be able to admit his cock-up and do the right thing. After all, he has all of the hospital facilities available to him.

*Well, I must go, now. I have to prepare for my weekly discussion group: I am teaching the group the basics of honour in politics. It is, really, a difficult subject.
Talk to you later,*

The Chief Lady of Hongkong

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