



## *The Betty Letters*

*My Dear Grandchild,*

*I am not very happy with Mr Edmund Ho, Chief Executive of the Macau Special Administrative Region (MSAR) of the People's Republic of China (PRC), following on from his announcement of the other day about giving MSAR civil servants a five-percent pay rise and reducing salaries tax by twenty five percent. What is he trying to achieve? It makes Hongkong look very bad in the eyes of Beijing, you know. Grandpa was livid when he received an advance of Mr Edmund Ho's proposals, but it happened so quickly that he did not have time to put the zipper on this youngster's mouth. It just goes to show you how a well-meaning youth can screw up an economy. The MSAR has only recently seen its economy improve and, immediately, this little upstart wants to give away money! What nonsense! Doesn't he realise that this will, also, hurt the economy of China? How can the Motherland impose higher taxes on the MSAR if Mr Edmund Ho continues to give away our money? In Hongkong, we are cutting back on salaries, chopping out unnecessary staff from here and there, and forcing some deadbeats of the Civil Service take early retirement. Grandpa is still wearing the same suit that he wore six months ago because I don't want people to get the wrong idea by thinking that he is trying to be ostentatious or even a show-off. I had a long talk with Grandpa as soon as I had studied Mr Edmund Ho's official pronouncements. I told Grandpa that he must impress on Mr Edmund Ho as to the folly of his ways. To begin with, I told him that all efforts between the MSAR and Hongkong should be coordinated in the best interests of Hongkong since Hongkong is, after all, the big 'brother' of the MSAR. Grandpa is the man, who should be guiding the fortunes of the southern China 'fleet', comprising the MSAR junk and the Hongkong leviathan. Courtesy demands that Mr Edmund Ho must liaise with Grandpa over all matters of pith and moment. In terms of seniority, Grandpa is, definitely, his superior, and Grandpa is his uncle, too, or at least, should be treated as such. Otherwise, there could be chaos in the fullness of time. What Mr Edmund Ho does not seem to realise is that the salaries of civil servants can go up at any time, but to bring them down is not easy. Known as the Government Stroke, civil servants, after all, are servants and, as such, they have the mentality of all servants. It is a well-known fact that some people possess slavery genes. Look at the Filipina maids of Hongkong: They are the living personification of slavery genes, having been developed to a very high degree. Civil servants think mostly of their own pockets, of matters of lust, and going on holiday. Take away a small part of the benefits that they think they are entitled to receive and it could easily result in there being a general strike. I have never told this to you before, but Grandpa has to have meetings, from time to time, with his servants. These meetings are not always happy ones, I can tell you. Servants can become uppity at times, you know. Come to think of it, prior to the American Civil War (1861-1865), the southerners of the US had a way of taking care of uppity servants, especially those who tried to run away from their masters. Whipping was commonplace, but what you may not know was that a servant who tried to escape more than once was likely to be hamstrung. This procedure, which did not hurt the servant too much when his/her Achilles Tendon was severed, completely, makes it impossible for him or her ever to walk normally again. That servant can, then, only hobble for a short distance. And, certainly a hamstrung person would never be able to run, again. Which made it easy to catch hold of him/her. I realise that such punishments cannot be imposed in Hongkong in this day and age, sadly, but I am thinking seriously of the prospects of imposing some kind of punishment on servants, who prove themselves to be disloyal. In Singapore,*

*the Government's weapon of choice for disloyal civil servants is to accuse them of libel and, then, after a disloyal servant loses the case, the penalty phase is so onerous as to make him or her an undischarged bankrupt for life. A person, found guilty of uttering libelous statements about the Government of Singapore or any member of that Government, could easily result in him/her, having to pay damages to the aggrieved plaintiff for the rest of her/his natural life. Unfortunately for Singapore, debtors' prisons have been abolished in the (democratic) Republic of Singapore, but it is an interesting thought for Hongkong, isn't it, because it was not that long ago that there used to be laws to prevent people from absconding. And a debtors' prison was commonplace in Hongkong when the British ruled the roost, here.*

*Yes, life at the top of the power pile is difficult; and, it is not made any easier when young upstarts, such as Mr Edmund Ho, rock the financial boat by being overly generous to servants. I have always maintained that it is better to have a clever enemy than a stupid friend. This is because, in the case of a stupid friend, one is never quite certain what that stupid person is capable of doing. And, when his stupid acts are very harmful to you, all that he will say is, 'sorry, friend'. In the case of a clever enemy, on the other hand, one may anticipate his or her likely actions, given a certain set of circumstances. Then, one can take measures to protect oneself. The Indians have a saying that if one sees a cobra and a Sindhi, shoot the Sindhi first because one never knows what he may do. Whereas, in the case of the cobra, one can predict its actions, allowing one to take defensive measures. The Indians know about these things better than most because they invented thugs, whose etymology of the word, 'thug' being 'thag', a Hindi word, meaning a cutthroat or ruffian; a hoodlum. Don't misunderstand me, My Dear Grandchild, I am not suggesting that Mr Edmund Ho is a thag, but he does appear to be that stupid friend, as far as I and Grandpa are concerned.*

*Well, time for bed. I hear clump, clump, clump in the living room: It is the clump, clump, clump of Grandpa, returning. I hope that he has not done anything stupid because you, really, cannot trust a man. Why are there so many of them?*

*Love you.*

*The Chief Lady of Hongkong*

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