



The Betty Letters

My Dear Grandchild,

I am now leaving Milford Sound, a very beautiful nature reserve in New Zealand. It resembles some of the many fjords of Norway or the most notable ones in Gwei Lin, in the Province of Guang Xi, my Motherland. Tall cliffs, large, cascading waterfalls, deep, clear waters, mist hovering over the topmost prominences of the cliffs, something akin to a magical fairyland. We cruised Milford Sound for most of the day and, then, headed out into the open water, again, bound for Tasmania. Tasmania, you may recall from history, was the place of the Great Hunt – for the Aborigines, the former natives of the island. White settlers, descendants of British criminals, transported for life from England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales, lined up at one end of the island of Tasmania and shot every ‘black bugger’ that came into their guns’ sights. So much for the civilisation of the Antipodes ! I shall be careful, when going ashore at Hobart in order to make certain that I do not get too close to the native Australians of the Capital City of Tasmania ... just in case they get the urge to cull some of the tourists in the manner of days of yore when they culled the Aborigines to extinction. While on deck, on February 9, Day One of The Year of the Rooster, viewing the beautiful sights of Milford Sound, I noted the manner in which the Captain of The Crystal Serenity, Mr Glenn Edvardsen, controls his service staff. Basically, on this lovely ship, there are Filipino service staff, Western European service staff and Eastern European service staff. The Western European service staff, generally, are the supervisors of the Eastern European service staff. The Filipinos are a very hard-working group and are the most affable. They go out of their way to assist passengers in every aspect, from serving meals, to bringing ice-water on the Lido Deck – that is the area of the swimming pool and sun-bathing couches – and it is a place where one may eat all day long. When you can find them, there are, also, mainly Eastern European service staff on the Lido Deck, but their job appears to be to exchange notes with each other about various guests, discuss which passenger pays the biggest tip, and to take photographs of themselves and of the scenery. While the Filipino staff go from one table to another, serving the requirements of the passengers, the Eastern Europeans, generally, stand by to view what the Filipinos are doing. The Filipinos, also, help the elderly ladies up from deck chairs and into the Jacuzzi, lest they slip. At first, I thought that the Eastern Europeans were just bone lazy, but, then, I began to realise the Captain’s grand plan for them: They are on board The Crystal Serenity for retraining! All of the Eastern European service staff, males and females, are relatively young, between the ages of about twenty years and thirty years, by and large. They, clearly, were brought up under the former Eastern European Communistic regimes where they only worked when commanded so to do. On board The Crystal Serenity, it appears that they, the lower-ranked, Eastern European service staff, are being weaned off the Communistic doctrine in a manner that I would describe as the influence of example. The Filipinos work hard, but that is because they have been taught, in their country, to work hard. In addition, they have been told by their government that they represent their country when they are hired by foreigners as waiters, cleaners, painters, maintenance workers, etc. The Eastern European service staff – lower-level staff, only, mind you – have been indoctrinated into another way of life: Don’t work unless you have to work because all of your labours and payment for such labours will, eventually, be distributed to others. The Captain must be clearly aware of the situation because, once I noted, Mr Giuseppe Schiavoni, who is, usually, the Head Waiter at the specialty Italian restaurant, Prego, telling some Eastern European layabouts: ‘You are supposed to be helping, not just standing

about! So help!’ (He, then, uttered something in Italian, which I presumed was an expletive) I assumed that, on occasion, these low-ranked, Eastern European service staff have to be reminded of the old days under the Communistic regime where the Order of The Gun was practised in order to keep the proletariat in their place. I would call this going back to one’s roots. One has to wonder, also, whether or not Captain Glenn Edvardsen wants to hire these people in order to groom them to be public relations people. Clearly, as service staff, they are hopeless, having never had the training or ability to enter any profession. In Western Europe, as I am certain you know, the service profession is highly motivated and highly respected, but, after sixty years of Communism, Eastern Europe has forgotten its heritage. What is enjoyable about these Eastern European service staff is their occasional quips. When one passenger asked for a second portion of orange ice cream with chocolate chips, the other day, an Eastern European service staff member, a rather handsome male, said that he did not think there was such an ice cream. The passenger, then, handed the Eastern European an empty cup, which contained the remnants of orange ice cream with chocolate chips. ‘Match this!,’ said the New Yorker to the Eastern European. The Eastern European looked deep into the near empty two-inch, paper cup and replied: ‘You want an empty cup?’ Funny, don’t you think? I shall make certain that Eastern Europeans are not employed in my government because they may set a bad example for the others in my employ. In Hongkong, we have similar situations, of course, but we deal with them, differently. When a Chinese from one of the outlying provinces comes to Hongkong in order to seek work, if he or she is lazy, they starve or go back to their province in shame. In the Motherland, there are other ways to deal with lazy commune workers, too. But Captain Glenn Edvardsen has a very good idea ... if he lives long enough to see the fruits of his labours.

Well, I must go now. I want to book my place on a tour to Hobart.

Love to all my people.

The Chief Lady of Hongkong

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