



The Betty Letters

My Dear Grandchild,

Questions have been raised in a number of quarters as to whether or not the holding of the Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in Hongkong, during Tuesday, December 13, 2005, to Sunday, December 18, 2005, was really worthwhile, as far as Hongkong was concerned. I know, as a fact, that more than one thousand, crack troops, belonging to the special Hongkong contingent of the People's Liberation Army (PLA), all dressed in nearly identical civilian clothes, were stationed, strategically, around the territory, guarding such landmarks as the Headquarters of The Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation at Queen's Road, Central, The Bank of China Building at Central, at certain hotels, especially those that are operated by American interests, as well as patrolling, incognito, in little inoffensive groups at key shopping malls, including Chinese Arts and Crafts in Wanchai, and, of course, around the giant shopping mall, Pacific Place. I, even, watched some of the PLA troops, practising their running skills in the afternoons, during those six hectic days, at their headquarters, opposite Bank of America Tower. From the point of view of testing the preparedness of the Hongkong contingent of the PLA and the Hongkong Police Force in the event of a real crisis, such as an attack by a foreign power, then, the six-day exercise was, indeed, a success. After all, every country has to test its preparedness, just in case war is declared. Who knows, perhaps Japan will try to conquer China, again. You know what the Japanese are like, don't you? They, still, worship World War II war criminals at certain Japanese shrines; and, Japan's Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi pays homage to those brutal killers of the late Emperor Hirohito. It is said by certain international geneticists that the innate propensity of militarism of the average Japanese is part of his genetic structure. The Code of Bushido lives on! Getting back to the WTO Ministerial Conference, held in Hongkong last December, the cost to Hongkong taxpayers for that Conference was at least five hundred million Hongkong dollars. Perhaps even more than that if one factors in Opportunity Cost Loss as well as the financial losses, incurred by shop-owners of Wanchai, Causeway Bay, Admiralty, all the way to Central Market. The Hongkong Government has gone on record as stating that it spent more than two hundred and thirty seven million Hongkong dollars in preparatory expenses for the WTO Conference, with the reasoning, being that it wanted to prove to the world that the territory is capable of holding such a large conference. Some other major cities of the world, however, those which have a proven record of their ability to host such a large conference, had rejected the WTO's overtures: They wanted no part of the December WTO Ministerial Conference.

A positive aspect of that week of demonstrations, leading up to the riots of Saturday, December 17, 2005, which lasted until the early hours of the morning of Sunday, December 18, 2005, was the splendid attitude of most members of the Hongkong Police Force. I, for one, do not like policemen – any policeman from any country, not just Hongkong policemen – because I view them as a necessary evil. I think of them as being akin to foul-tasting medicine: One, sometimes, has to ingest foul-tasting medicine in order to recover from a sickness. When the medicine has done its job, however, one is grateful to the person who developed it. However, one, still, does not love the stuff. Soldiers of the world fall into the same category as policemen of the world because, by their very nature, being taught to kill the enemy, among other things, whoever the enemy may be, they are, by and large, mindless human animals, carrying out the orders of their superiors, with blind obedience. The average soldier of the PLA is no different from any other soldier of the world, except, perhaps, that he is a little shorter in stature than the average Western soldier and, perhaps, his standard of education is somewhat lower, generally, than, say the academic level of the average American

soldier in the field. However, I was impressed by the politeness of the PLA soldiers whom I met on the week of the WTO Ministerial Conference of last December. By the way, I wonder which government had to pay for the PLA's covert surveillance and presence at strategic areas of Hongkong, during the WTO Conference: Beijing or Hongkong? It could not have been very much money, I suppose, say one thousand dollars per day per soldier? That would bring it to about six million Hongkong dollars, at most. In a conversation with one executive of an American hotel, during the WTO Conference, he joked with me and said that the Hongkong police and the PLA soldiers, in charge of the operations and security arrangements in respect of the X-ray machines at the entrances of the five-star hotels in Central and Admiralty, were all trainees – because they were too polite: 'Rude ones are those members of the police and army, who have been on the job for a long period of time.' As for the Hongkong police, especially the Marine Police, I must tell you that I admired them, immensely, especially on the first day of the WTO Conference. What happened was that a bunch of South Korean farmers (or whatever they claimed to be) jumped into Victoria Harbour, just beside the Convention Centre where the WTO Conference was being held. Rather than quickly pulling out the fifty or so South Korean farmers, the flotilla of marine police launches, laden with Hongkong policemen, just looked on for the best part of one hour. When some of the South Korean farmers started to turn a little pale, and, then, the paleness turned to a little blueness, due to the coldness of the salt water, it was at that point, only, that rescue attempts were initiated. The South Korean farmers, at that planned swim in Victoria Harbour, determined that it would be the first and last such demonstration in the very cold waters separating Hongkong Island from Kowloon. There are no statistics as to how many of the South Korean swimmers contracted colds or influenza, but I imagine the incidents were quite high.

On the last day of the WTO Conference, things took a turn for the worst, however, as rioting broke out, resulting in more than one thousand demonstrators, being arrested by Hongkong policemen and policewomen, with one hundred and forty four persons, eventually being charged. The South Koreans became violent and produced impromptu weapons, which they attempted to use on the Hongkong police. I was very impressed at the way that the Hongkong police handled that potentially explosive situation: Not once did a Hongkong policeman even try to shoot just one South Korean. If that riot had taken place in New York City – which was one of the cities that had refused to host the WTO Ministerial Conference – I am certain that some of the South Korean farmers would have been flown back to Korea ... in body bags.

In conclusion, My Dear Grandchild, I think that the Government of Hongkong made a huge mistake by agreeing to host that WTO Conference. It was known, long in advance, that unruly elements from South Korea would enter Hongkong and were bound to create riots and affray. Hongkong has a long history for holding demonstrations in a peaceful and orderly manner because we are more civilised than the South Korean farmers. What is frightening, now, of course, is that some of the hotheads of Hongkong might get the idea of trying to emulate the actions of their South Korean counterparts in the future. Nothing, in my opinion, was gained by the Hongkong Government, agreeing to hold the WTO Ministerial Conference in my town. Hopefully, once will be enough. Please note that the WTO did not ask Beijing to host the December 2005 Ministerial Conference. I suppose the Tiananmen Square democracy 'Conference' of June 3, 1989, and June 4, 1989, when the PLA squashed hundreds of unarmed Chinese students with their tanks sent the correct message to the world.

Talk to you next week.

Chief Lady

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