



The Betty Letters

My Dear Grandchild,

While President George W. Bush dreams of weaning the United States of America off its oil addiction over the next nineteen years, or so, I wonder whether or not he has considered laying plans to safeguard passage through the Strait of Hormuz. You may not have heard of this little stretch of water, My Dear Grandchild, because it is a relatively narrow waterway, linking The Persian Gulf on the west, with The Gulf of Oman and The Arabian Sea on the east. Separating The Arabian Peninsula from Iran, it is about 170 miles long and between 30 miles and 50 miles wide. It is similar, in many respects, to the English Channel, separating the United Kingdom from France/Europe. It is of great strategic and economic significance to the worldwide shipments of oil, you know. There are Qeshm Island, claimed by Iran, as well as three other islands: Tunb al Kubrá (Greater Tunb), Tunb asSughrá (Lesser Tunb), and Abû Mûsá, the last-named, having been seized by Iran in 1971, but it is, still, claimed by the United Arab Emirates. With the Board of Directors of The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), having decided to adopt a Resolution to report the Iran situation to the United Nations Security Council with regard to the intransigence stance of Iran of not bowing to international pressure and being determined to reopen its nuclear facilities and to enrich uranium, the likelihood exists that, should the Iranian Government want to hit back at the West, it could attempt to shut down the Strait of Hormuz. That would drive up the price of crude oil on international markets, immediately. If Iran determined to try to shut down traffic in the international waters of the Strait of Hormuz, such a move is likely to be met by the United States, sending in its warships in order to patrol the waterway, using whatever means it deems correct, proper and necessary. Iran has, already, warned the West that, in the event that the United Nations imposes economic sanctions on this fundamentalistic Islamic country, it would retaliate, sending oil prices to record highs. In my opinion, Iran is not making idle threats. With a fighting force of more than fifteen million, physically able soldiers, sailors and airmen, (males, females and kids), Iran could be formidable foe. Unlike Saddam Hussein of Iraq, who was all bluster and little else when it came to taking on the might of the American Army, Iran, with its fanatical militia, could cause a great deal of trouble to any country of the world if it were determined and sufficiently bloody minded so to do. One thing seems obvious, however, Iran is not going to discontinue to pump oil and to sell it, but it could limit its buyers to Muslim countries, sympathetic to the theosophy and causes of Iran. One way to guarantee the country's policies would be to close the Strait of Hormuz to traffic, considered to be hostile to Iran and to the Islamic World, with the United States, being right up there at the top of the list of enemies, of course.

I cannot disagree with the West that, should Iran obtain nuclear weaponry, it could well pose an international threat. On that score, President George W. Bush and his cronies are right on the mark. But for the United States and its friends to embark on another military expedition is unlikely to pay dividends. It would be preferable for a diplomatic solution to this problem to be fully investigated because war, which is a further extension of diplomacy, is, I hope, the one road that the West would not try to walk. I assume that the West will be proactive in respect of guaranteeing passage along international waterways, the Strait of

Hormuz, being but one crucial stretch of water. Iran is threatening the world with economic chaos – and has the power to carry out its threats. In terms of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries, it is the Number Two exporter. One must not lose sight, also, of the fact that the country is the fourth-largest oil producer in the world, today. Iran's annual output of crude oil is about 1.30 billion barrels, with about one quarter of that amount of oil, being used domestically, the rest, being sold to the highest bidder. Ironically, in 1975, Iran was well on the way to building its first, nuclear power-generating station at Bûshehr, on the Persian Gulf coast, but the unfinished plant was bombed, during the Iraq-Iran War, which lasted from 1980 to 1988. During that war, more than one million people died on both sides. While this war raged, Iran quadrupled its electrical power output by the construction of a number of new natural gas and hydroelectric power stations. The country is rich in fossil fuels and its insistence that it needs a nuclear power station is nonsense, in my opinion. One has to ask oneself: For what reason does the present Government of Iran stand so firmly and vehemently on its stated ambitions to be another nuclear power in the world? As with North Korea, if it is just a matter of increasing Iran's generation of electricity for peaceful purposes, that can be accomplished with relative ease, by the construction of non-nuclear power stations since Iran has huge reserves of oil and natural gas. It seems clear that that which Iran really wants is to join the international nuclear club. Hopefully, it will be denied entrance.

Talk to you next week.

Chief Lady

***While TARGET makes every attempt to ensure accuracy of all data published,
TARGET cannot be held responsible for any errors and/or omissions.***

If readers feel that they would like to voice their opinions about that which they have read in TARGET, please feel free to e-mail your views to editor@targetnewspapers.com or targnews@hkstar.com. TARGET does not guarantee to publish readers' views, but reserves the right so to do subject to the laws of libel.

