

## *The Betty Letters*

*My Dear Grandchild,*

*It seems to have gone unnoticed by a great number of people, including some high-ranking officials of the governments of a number of Western countries, but the head of one of the world's superpowers has taken the trouble to make a call at the home of another of the world's superpower – only to be met by suspicion, laced with a little bit of loathing. I am referring to the China's President, Mr Hu Jin Tao, visiting the United States of America, recently. If anything, it was a courtesy call: One which should have been viewed as saying: 'Let's be friends!' However, a major question has been raised in the United States by this visit of one of the world's most powerful leaders: 'Is China a friend of the United States or an enemy?' President George W. Bush agreed to meet President Hu Jin Tao and, at this meeting, it was clear that there was a number of differences between the two leaders of the world's largest economies. President Hu Jin Tao had no hidden agenda, in fact, he, probably, had no agenda other than stating that China wanted to cement its friendship with its largest trading partner. President Hu Jin Tao even took the trouble to have a meal with the Founder of Microsoft, Mr Bill Gates. For what reason do you attribute to the fact that the Head of State of one of the largest economies of the world would break bread with a man who has no political ambitions, at all? Microsoft/Bill Gates needs China: It is not the other way round. That some people are at odds with China is well known. Then, again, there are quite a number of people, who are at odds with the policies of the United States, with the policies of France, with the policies of the United Kingdom, etc, etc, etc. It is true that China is not a democracy, in the way that America is a democracy, but the country is evolving, from the requirements of the late 1940s when Chairman Mao Tse Tung ran the country, following the cessation of World War II and the successful struggle with the powers – funded by the United States of America, by the way – of the late Generalissimo Chiang Kai Shek, to the emerging market economy of today. To be sure, the Government of China will have to change with the times, but the change will be at its pace, not at the pace, determined by President George W. Bush and his henchmen and henchwomen. It is very easy to criticise the actions of just about anybody or any country because it could, always, be held that things could have been done better if ...*

*I was talking to a Canadian banker, recently, and I told him that the actions of the late Paramount Leader of China, Mr Deng Xiao Ping, in respect of the Tiananmen Square kerfuffle of June 4, 1989, were, probably, the best actions of the day, considering everything in light of the situation that existed at that time. The Canadian banker, politely, said that he did not agree. I, then, asked him what he would have done, faced with about one million Chinese students, all claiming that they wanted democracy, immediately. The banker said that he did not appreciate the fact that there had been one million students at Tiananmen Square when the order was made to send in the tanks. After being assured that there was that large number of students, demonstrating in the Capital City of China on that date, I asked these questions: 'Would it have been better for China to be faced with, and allowed to permit, anarchy on that date? Or would it have been better to quash the student demonstrations in the interests of the country as a whole?' The banker was somewhat perplexed at this point because, obviously, good political order is far better than no political order, at all.*

*However, the world criticised the actions of China's Government of June 1989, stating that it was barbaric to send in the People's Liberation Army and to crush the 'student rebellion'. I wonder what President George W. Bush would do if one million black Americans camped on the White House lawn, demanding that a black man be afforded equal political rights as the white President and that that black man should share the Oval Office with the President, immediately. Constitutionally, such a consideration could not even be placed on the table, but if the one million blacks refused to move until they obtained their 'just' demands, would the American army be called in to remove the demonstrators? And, if in the melee that followed, some American blacks were killed and seriously injured, would the world claim that President George W. Bush had acted wrongly in breaking up the demonstrations? It is very easy, you see, to criticise the actions of the man who heads a government, especially when that man finds himself in a crisis situation, one which demands immediate and definitive action. Today, some American Senators are claiming that the emphasis of President George W. Bush in March 2003 should have been the elimination of Osama bin Laden and his al-Qaeda network, not the armed attack on Iraq. It is easy to look at Iraq, today, and to state that the United States has made mistakes in its handling of the situation. But has it? Only time will tell. Clearly, however, the dismantling of the former political regime of Iraq under Saddam Hussein was a job well done; and, I have no doubt that, when the dust settles in Iraq and order is restored, the people of this Middle Eastern country will be grateful for their freedom even though the price was high.*

*Turning back to China, again, and the recent courtesy call of President Hu Jin Tao to Washington D.C., President George W. Bush pressed the Chinese leader to allow the renminbi to gain in strength on international foreign-exchange markets so that Chinese-produced goods, sold in the United States, would become more expensive than they are now. It was not put in those terms, of course, because it is doubtful that President George W. Bush has thought the matter through, comprehensively, as to what a de facto revaluation of the renminbi vis-à-vis the American dollar would do for the world's largest superpower. The facts of this matter are that goods, produced in China and shipped to the United States at today's foreign-exchange rate, are keeping check on inflation in the United States. If China were – and I use the subjunctive case, here – to stop selling its garments, shoes, electric toasters, microwave ovens, etc, to the United States, inflation would gallop away in a shot. It could be held, therefore, that China is doing a favour for its major trading partners and, at the same time, its major trading partners are causing China's industries to expand at historical high levels. In short, both the trading partners and China benefit from barrier-free trading conditions. Of course, there is plenty of room for improvements, of that there is not question, but, when the head of one superpower calls on the head of another superpower for no other reason than to cement ties with a major trading partner, is that the time to take the opportunity to pick the hairs out of an old egg? Should not the matter of foreign-exchange rates be left to those people, employed by President George W. Bush's Administration, to take up such matters with their appropriate counterparts in China and not to try to embarrass President Hu Jin Tao? Intellectual property rights was another thorny matter that was raised, last week in Washington D.C. Graciously, President Hu Jin Tao said that China was serious in trying to tackle this thorny matter – and that it would be tackled. As for the matter of human rights in China, it is true that the Middle Kingdom employs a deterrent form of sentencing malcontents and criminals. One could criticise this, also, and rightly so too. But, again, what is the alternative? When I was in Egypt, early last year, I asked my tour guide as to the incidences of crime in the country. The answer was that Egypt was one of the safest countries in the world, today. He said that rapists, thieves, and murderers, etc, are dealt with quickly and decisively. I, then, asked him as to the population of the prisons in the country. He answered that the prison population was very low. I wonder as to the reason that nobody questioned the matter of human rights in Egypt, where a woman may be stoned to death for an alleged adulterous act, where a rapist is executed, sometimes on the spot, and where a thief may have his hand cut off in accordance with the laws of the Q'ran.*

*Talk to you next week.*

***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](mailto:editor@targetnewspapers.com). **TARGET** does not guarantee to publish readers' views, but reserves the right so to do subject to the laws of libel.*