

The Betty Letters

My Dear Grandchild,

The Americans keep pressing the Motherland for more protection of international intellectual property rights in the country. I am getting very tired of listening to these bitches because I know that the American's claims are only half truths, similar to the situation when any excuse was better than none for the invasion of Iraq on March 21, 2003. Of course, there is, always, the exception to the rule, but, generally, Chinese manufacturers and businessmen do not steal or copy from somebody else because they are so innovative in their own right that they do not have to stoop to this level. If any country should be blamed for perpetrating such skulduggery, it is Japan. They have been international thieves for decades. Recently, I was in Shanghai and happened to overhear a conversation on this very topic. Two Shanghainese industrialists – I cannot name them because they are acquaintances of Bo-Bo, my husband – were having a luncheon at a swank restaurant in a five-star hotel and this is what they had to say about the American allegations. The dialogue is, really, scintillating and inspiring:

Man Number One: China is being pilloried for being the most-successful economy in the world. That is the reason that the Americans and the Europeans are complaining about us. They are just jealous of us.

Man Number Two: Yes. You are right.

Man Number One: We, Chinese, work very hard and just because we have better workers than those of the Americans and the Europeans, workers, many very young and some, who are very old, but all of whom are not greedy and do not ask for too much in the way of wages and other perquisites, we are forced to accept restrictions on our exports to the American and European markets.

Man Number Two: Yes. You are right.

Man Number One: My friend, Mr Wong Kam Seng, is making ladies underwear and employs more than two thousand workers at his Guangdong factory. His products are much better than Calvin Klein and Warcoal, but he has had a lawyer's letters, recently, complaining that his products are exactly the same as those of the lawyer's clients. That is ridiculous! Even the labels on Mr Wong's underwear are different from either Calvin Klein or Warcoal. And the 'Made In China' tag is, clearly, displayed. Just because his factory is in the vicinity of the factories, producing Calvin Klein and Warcoal, it is assumed that he is copying those brands' products. That is what I call, 'Guilty by Proximity'.

Man Number Two: Yes. You are right.

Man Number One: Anyway, if the Americans and the Japanese are afraid that the Chinese versions of their clothes are too good, then, their best course of action is to request a conference with the manufacturer concerned in order to investigate whether or not a joint venture is possible. We, Chinese, are very reasonable and very pliable! Offer us a reasonable

settlement and we are quite likely to accept it. All we want is to make money; we don't want to be accused of passing off and, then, have to pay blood-sucking English and American lawyers to defend us against allegations of encroaching on international, intellectual property rights.

Man Number Two: Yes. You are right.

Man Number One: I recall the kerfuffle between Crocodile Garments and Lacoste and how it was, eventually, resolved through negotiations, leading to the Crocodile logo, looking one way, and the Lacoste logo, looking in the opposite direction. That is what I call intelligence negotiation. Today, Crocodile and Lacoste are friendly competitors, working toward a common goal: To make lots and lots of money. Without the Chan Family of Hongkong, Lacoste would have fallen by the wayside, a very long time ago. If anything, Hongkong saved Lacoste from going bankrupt.

Man Number Two: Yes. You are right.

Man Number One: By the way, have you seen my new Messerotti, yet? It is the best car that I have ever owned. Made near Beijing, you know, at a little factory in the country. Even the engine is made here, in my country. I am very proud of it. It is so fast! You have no idea how exciting it is to drive it. Yes, you can't beat a Chinese-made Messerotti!

Man Number Two: Yes. You are right.

Man Number One: I suppose, now, the Italians will claim that the Messerotti is a copy of their famous sports car, called Maserati, or something like that?

Man Number Two: Yes. You are right.

Man Number One: I am thinking of entering the restaurant field soon, you know. As far as I can ascertain, it is 'cash cow'. Everything is cash. Taxes can't be too high in such a field because the Government can't tell how much money the restaurant is making. (Ha-Ha)

Man Number Two: Yes. You are right.

Man Number One: What do you think of the name: Strawbucks Coffee Shop? It has a unique kind of lyrical ring to it, don't you think?

Man Number Two: Yes. You are right.

Man Number One: China grows a lot of coffee so I thought I would go to the countryside in order to find a coffee plantation to grow my kind of coffee, which I would call, Brew Mountain Coffee. What has Columbia got that China has not got better?

Man Number Two: Yes. You are right.

Man Number One: Talking about food and drink, I am reminded that the Japanese are passing off China's Golden Noodle instant food, having transliterated the name into the Japanese language. China should complain about that, don't you think?

Man Number Two: Yes. You are right.

Man Number One: We should impose tariffs on Japanese foodstuffs, entering China as punishment for stealing our invention of instant noodles.

Man Number Two: Yes. You are right.

Man Number One: We, Chinese, invented noodles; it was the Italians, back in the Thirteenth Century, who stole the patent from us. Now, that is passing off!

Man Number Two: Yes. You are right.

Man Number One: For what reason have not the Italians paid compensation to the Chinese Government? We should ban Italian spaghetti from entering China.

Man Number Two: Yes. You are right.

Man Number One: Changing the subject, just last month, one of China's best-known computer scientists was accused of copying computer software, perfected, in part, by Microsoft Corporation. All that this scientist did was to improve on the product and make it acceptable in the Chinese marketplace. I see nothing wrong with that.

Man Number Two: Yes. You are right.

Man Number One: Look, the Japanese stole the concept of Henry Ford's motor car, many years ago, even down to the manufacturing methods, but Ford Motor Company of Illinois has yet to complain. So for what reason should Microsoft complain? We are just doing that company a big favour. And we are not asking for payment for that favour, too!

Man Number Two: Yes. You are right.

Man Number One: Also, that British composer, Mr Andrew Lloyd Webber, who has been given credit for the music in the opera, 'The Phantom of the Opera', is just a plagiarist, you know. Actually, it was Giacomo Puccini, the Italian composer of the Nineteen Century, who composed the motif that Andrew Lloyd Webber pilfered in The Phantom of the Opera. Puccini composed that very same motif for his famous opera, 'The Girl of the Golden West.' And Puccini composed his opera seventy three years before Andrew Lloyd Webber finished his opera! For what reason has not the estate of Giacomo Puccini sued Andrew Lloyd Webber for passing off?

Man Number Two: Yes. You are right.

Man Number One: For what reason has not China's Government come down hard on the Americans and the Europeans? Look, Israel has been a bankrupt country since it was founded in 1948 and we, all, know how the Jews do business. From the time that the sun descends on Friday to the sunset of Saturday, they don't even work! How can the country ever go forward with that kind of work ethic! I call the Jews: The lazy Semites. I guess they are, still, thinking that they are wandering in the desert, looking for The Land of Milk and Honey.

Man Number Two: Yes. You are right.

Man Number One: They even have the atom bomb, you know. The nuclear technology was stolen from the French some years ago, but nobody has complained. If Israel can have the bomb, why not Iran? Do you think that the Jews can be trusted more than the Arabs? In my opinion, they deserve each other.

Man Number Two: Yes. You are right.

Man Number One: If China were to have an economy as that of Israel, do you have any idea how it would impact on the rest of the world? Where would American housewives be able to buy their toothpaste, sanitary napkins, clothes, washing machines, microwave ovens, television sets, etc, etc, etc? Without us, inflation in America would just gallop away and the economy would be nothing. Without us, there would be no \$US10 shops in America and Canada.

Man Number Two: Yes. You are right.

Man Number One: America and Europe should be proud that there is a country which is willing to help the ageing economies of the world. And, if, sometimes, we tend to make products that resemble some of the products of America and Europe, then, that is the price that these old economies have to pay for progress. You see, my friend, actually, we are helping them to move ahead and to be competitive on the world stage.

Man Number Two: Yes. You are right.

Man Number One: I like talking to you because we seem to see eye-to-eye on all subjects. You don't say very much and I detect that you think even less than that: Very similar, in fact, to the Palestinians of the West Bank.

Man Number Two: Yes. You are right.

Great stuff! Don't you think, My Dear Grandchild?

Well, I must go. I'll write to you, again, next week.

Chief Lady

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