

## *The Betty Letters*

*My Dear Grandchild,*

*The very successful and bloodless coup d'état in Thailand on Tuesday, September 19, by the head of the Thai Army, General Sondhi Boonyaratkalin, reminded me of something that I was told by a former, senior official of Chase Manhattan Bank, who was for a time, stationed in Hongkong. During the time that Grandpa was trying to run things here, this gweilo told me at an official function that the policy of Chase Manhattan Bank with regard to Thailand was that every 7 years or so, if there had been no coup d'état, Chase Manhattan Bank would withdraw from the country any and all risky investments and take the bank's money out of the local banks – he was referring to the Thai Interbank Market – in order not to become a victim of any large fluctuations in the value of the baht vis-à-vis the American dollar. Such was the opinion of Thailand, then, and I doubt that Chase Manhattan Bank thinks very differently of the country, today. By the way, I suppose you remember that Chase Manhattan Bank was one of the first US banks with offices in Hongkong to shut up shop in the territory, during the riots of 1966-1967. The bank closed down its Central office just after Governor David Trench and his wife were off to London: Safety first, I suppose. Anyway, getting back to the coup d'état in Thailand, do you think that the country is democratic? According to my reading of the situation, while the former Prime Minister, Mr Thaksin Shinawatra, was at a United Nations's meeting in New York, his position as head of the legal government of Thailand was usurped by General Sondhi Boonyaratkalin who, then, 'imprisoned' the beloved king of the country and asked him for his blessings for the illegal act of taking control of the country by force. This is not the first time that this has happened as Chase Manhattan Bank well knows when it determined its modus operandi in respect of The Land of Smiles. While one is told that General Sondhi Boonyaratkalin had nobody shot or stabbed to death, during his takeover of the country's government, you must understand that this man is a paid, expert killer – by profession. If war is an extension of a political process by other means, what may one call last Tuesday week's situation in Thailand: An extension of the democratic process of the country by other means? What happened on Tuesday, September 19, 2006, in Thailand, most certainly, could not be considered part of a democratic process by my understanding of political science. And, now, one is told that General Sondhi Boonyaratkalin will determine which civilian will become the next Prime Minister to lead the country. So, I suppose it is fair to state that the man that General Sondhi Boonyaratkalin determines may sit in the Prime Minister's chair will be permitted in that position just as long as it suits the General's ambitions, whatever they may be. In the event, let us say, that the new, appointed Prime Minister decides that General Sondhi Boonyaratkalin is unsuitable for the post as head of the Thai Army and, as such, attempts to strip him of power, may one expect another coup d'état, led by General Sondhi Boonyaratkalin, in order to oust the appointed Prime Minister with another appointee? During television interviews with some of the so-called intellectuals of Thailand, at Bangkok, the Capital City of the country, one heard diatribe such as, 'He (former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra) had to go', 'It is a good idea to change him', and 'I don't know if he is corrupt, but I am happy that the Thai Government is in strong hands, now.' One has to ponder: For what reason, if the former Prime Minister was not loved/appreciated/acceptable to the people of Thailand, was he not ousted from power in accordance with the Thai Constitution via the legal process? Or, does the Thai Constitution advocate illegal acts by the country's paid killers?*

*About General Sondhi Boonyaratkalin, it is well known that he never liked Mr Thaksin Shinawatra and he, publicly, criticised some of his policies. General Sondhi Boonyaratkalin had only been in the job of Army Commander-In-Chief for the best part of one year and, within that relatively short period of time, he had conspired to overthrow the rightful and legal government of the country. It matters little as to the motives of*

*this General of the Thai Army. It is sufficient to state that he acted illegally and, theoretically, put the lives of many Thai and foreign residents and tourists at risk in order to achieve his own ambitious, illegal ends. He has done it once and, clearly, he has the ability to do it again if he, unilaterally, determines that the government of the country is not acting in accordance with his preconceived notions of how the country should be governed. Now that he has control of the Government of Thailand, it is noted that the Thai Press has been contained and radio and television broadcasts are being blocked in the event that they are deemed to be trying to broadcast information which is contrary to the aspirations of the coup members or is harmful to the coup, itself, or any member of the coup. Today, the people's freedoms in Thailand are non-existent and even meetings of any kind have been banned, regardless of the reasons for the meetings.*

*In Taiwan, there have been widespread demonstrations by the people against President Chen Shui Bian (), but, thus far, the Taiwan Army has not entered the fray even though it is known that members of President Chen Shui Bian's family have been involved in widespread corruption. Even when an assassin attempted to kill President Chen Shui Bian in May 2004, the Taiwan Army was not called in. In the US, during the Presidency of Bill Clinton when it was known that he had had an affair with Monica Lewinsky and had perjured himself about the matter, the US Army did not stage a coup d'état even during the impeachment proceedings. In civilised countries of the world where the idea of democracy is imbued in the electorate and the rule of law is paramount, there is no place for an illegal political act such as a coup d'état. Even in my Hongkong, when more than half a million people marched through the streets, complaining about this and that, the People's Liberation Army was not called in to quell the walkabout. And, certainly, there has never been a coup d'état in these 416 square miles – which is not even a democracy!*

*Certainly, it is a poor state of affairs in Thailand, today, and I can see no justification for it. It makes me sick! Who wants to live under martial law or suffer under a puppet government which, at any time, may be overthrown by the military of the country? I remember a speech by Nikita Krushchev of Russia, who died in 1971, who said:*

*'If you feed people just with revolutionary slogans, they will listen, today; they will listen, tomorrow; they will listen the day after tomorrow. But on the fourth day, they will say "To hell with you!"'*

*Criticise Chinese politics if you like, but it is still a democratic country ... even though the results of any election are predetermined by the head(s) of government, prior to the first vote, having been cast by those who are permitted to vote by decree.*

*Talk to you, next week.*

*Chief Lady*

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