

The Betty Letters

My Dear Grandchild,

You, probably, never realised it, but I have, always, been a bit of an historian and political scientist (amateur, of course) in my spare time. I have noted, with special interest, the spectacular rise, over the past 30 years or so, of the economy of my country. I wondered: What is the reason for the success of the economy of China? One special and outstanding factor with regard to the determination of the Government of China is that its foreign policy is predicated by the needs of the country in terms of its wants, present and future, based on a platform of mutual cooperation with its present and future trading partners. China, since the 1970s, at least, has never indicated that it was expansionistic in its ambitions, unlike the Government of Japan, especially. Recently, Premier Wen Jia Bao, at the Opening Ceremony of The Third China-ASEAN Business and Investment Summit in Nanning, Guang Xi, on October 31, 2006, said, among other things:

‘China and ASEAN countries ... have similar cultures, we have gone through similar stages of development and there is a long history of friendly contacts between our peoples. In the early 1990s, China and ASEAN initiated the process of dialogue and cooperation, opening a new chapter in China-ASEAN relations. Over the past 15 years, guided by the principle of "mutual respect, equality and mutual trust, mutual benefit and win-win cooperation", we have expanded cooperation in all fields. The all-round growth of China-ASEAN business ties has brought substantive economic benefits to both sides and become an important basis and strong driving force for boosting the overall China-ASEAN relations. Our trade has grown rapidly. In 1991, China-ASEAN trade was only about \$US8 billion. In 2005, it reached \$US130.40 billion, registering an increase of 15 times. China and ASEAN are now the 4th biggest trading partner of each other. ASEAN is China's fourth biggest export market and third biggest source of imports Today, tropical fruits like durian, mangosteen and ramboostan from Southeast Asia are popular with Chinese consumers. China's temperate zone fruits like apples, pears and oranges are now easily affordable to ASEAN consumers ... People-to-people exchanges have increased. All ten ASEAN countries are now approved destinations for Chinese tourists. In 2005, 3 million Chinese tourists visited ASEAN countries as the first stop of their overseas tours, accounting for one-third of the total number of outbound tourists in the year. China is also a popular destination for ASEAN tourists. In 2005, 3 million of them visited China, accounting for one-fifth of total foreign tourists, visiting China in the year. Under the China-ASEAN framework, China trains 1,500 professionals for ASEAN countries every year ...’.

(In case you have not been following the events of The Third China-ASEAN Business and Investment Summit, its final session was last Sunday)

Impressive statistics, don't you think? ASEAN – The Association of South East Asian Nations – comprises Indonesia, Malaysia, The Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Brunei Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar and Cambodia. In addition to ASEAN nations, China has been actively spreading its wings to non-ASEAN, African nations where it has spent vast sums of money in building up part of the infrastructure of some of the poorest nations of that Continent. In return, China has secured reliable bases for the importation of badly needed raw materials, such as oil, copper, zinc, iron ore, cotton, etc. As an example, in January 2004, the then Vice President of China, Mr Zeng Qing Hong, visited Gabon, a tiny country on the western side of Africa. He negotiated a contract for Gabon to supply China with crude oil. Gabon has a population of only 1.36 million people and is a very poor country. The country has a Gross National Product of about

\$US4,028 million, yielding \$US3,060 per capita in 2002, which is the highest in sub-Saharan Africa, due to the low population and its earnings from oil exports. Living standards for most of the population are low, however. More than 70 percent of the Gabonese still depend on agriculture for their livelihood. But China considered this little country worthy of its attention and sent one of its seasoned politicians to landlocked Gabon in order to see (a) what help China could give to this African nation and (b) what products it could buy from it. It was a very far-sighted view of China's Government, in my opinion. I could give many more examples of such perspicaciousness of the Government of China. The major differences, it seems to me, between the foreign policy of the United States and that of China is that China looks at long-range planning, the US, on the other hand, is somewhat myopic in its dealings with governments of foreign lands, especially those countries whose constitutions are alien to those of the United States of America. China is tolerant of cultures and political structures of foreign countries and, although it may not agree with the politics of countries, such as Gabon, Chad, Nigeria, Sudan, Zambia, etc, it adopts a hands-off policy and concentrates on trade issues along the win-win policy as laid down by the National People's Congress. The US, as you are well aware, has determined to spread the 'word': Change your Constitution/Administration to a Western-styled democracy, such as ours. Yet, not every country is ready to embrace the American-style of democracy as the cornerstone of its political beliefs at this time, for one reason or another. Singapore and China, for instance, both have democratic constitutions, but neither one of them is, truly, a democracy in the Western sense of the word. China believes in elections of its delegates to the National People's Congress, but only when the outcome is known, prior to the casting of the first ballot. In Singapore, The Land of Lee Kuan Yew Incorporated, prior to any election, it is well known which political party will win. The People's Action Party (PAP) has dominated everything in Singapore politics since 1965 and the Prime Minister has always been a member of the Lee Kuan Yew Family or a sycophant of the Family. This has been the situation since the founding of the city state in 1965. As a sovereign city state, dominated by Lee's illiberal but still formally democratic regime, Singapore has prospered economically to the extent that it was, effectively, a developed country by the end of the 1980s. I would say that that was good going for a country with just 7 million people over a period of only 15 years. Of course, Singapore, also, has among the highest number of material libel suits in the world, with the Government of Singapore and/or its ministers, past and present, issuing challenges in the Singapore High Court against any and all usurpers to the Lee Kuan Yew 'throne'. On a per capita basis, Singapore has the greatest number of libel actions, of that I am quite confident. I should add, at this point, that the jury system in Singapore is not employed in libel Actions: One judge suffices.

Criticise other nations as much as you like, but you cannot fault success. The peoples of China have never had it as good as the present time. And I am going back more than 5,000 years. The same is true of Singapore, going back to the time that the British raj ruled the roost. China believes in the deterrent form of punishment, as does Singapore: China shoots its felons in public executions; Singapore hangs them or, depending on the whims of the Lee Kuan Yew Family, bankrupts malcontents after being found guilty in its one-judge court of law. Nobody has helped China reach its present pinnacle of financial success: It has done it without US Government aid and in spite of the hatred that the US Government has demonstrated over the years for communism. Within the coming decades, the economy of China is quite likely to surpass that of the US. Its motor-vehicle industry is set to eclipse that of Japan's within the next decade, to be sure; Detroit is, already, a dead duck. China knows that it needs a great deal more raw materials in order to feed its factories which, in turn, supply goods and services to many other parts of the world. About 2-plus decades ago, it sent out political emissaries, far and wide, to forge bonds, not just with the powerhouses of the world, but with poor African nations, nations which required help because, for one reason or another, they could not, adequately, help themselves. By China, building highways, bridges, power stations, etc, in those poor nations, it was helping itself to the riches of Africa to be harvested in the future. Statistics prove that China has assisted not less than 53 African countries and, last year, it was credited with being the world's third-largest donor of food. China has invested not less than \$US7 billion in Africa, alone. What a difference between the policies of China and those of the US! It is said, and there is a great deal of truth to it, that the smaller countries of the world, more often than not, are more outward-looking than the larger ones. This is due to the fact that the smaller country teaches its youth a great deal about the world and, to some extent, ignores its own history and economy – because it is small. The largest countries of the world, on the other hand, teach its youth a great deal about its own history and economy and neglects the history, economics and cultures of the smallest countries of the world. I never was taught about the economics of Chad when I was in school or that its Capital City is N'Djamena (formerly Fort-Lamy). I had no idea that Libreville is Gabon's largest city as well as its capital, with a population of 365,650 people. Myopia, you see, is only too prevalent in the education systems of the US, the United Kingdom, countries of the European Union, etc. Necessity is still the mother of invention. It is true – China has proved that. Give credit where it is due, My Dear Grandchild.

Talk to you next week.

Chief Lady

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