



## *The Betty Letters*

*My Dear Grandchild,*

*Make no mistake about it: People power is alive and, virtually, kicking in Hongkong. The kerfuffle over the dismantling of the old Star Ferry Clock and its little tower, in the middle of last December, was just one of many examples of people power in Hongkong. The Government of Chief Executive Donald Tsang Yam Kuen () got a black eye over that situation. It will not be the last black eye that this Administration will enjoy, I can assure you. Also, in the middle of last December, there was the matter of pregnant women from across the border, coming to Hongkong in order to deliver their babies – at the expense of the Hongkong taxpayers because these new mothers would just leave the territory, their medical bills, being unpaid, for the most part and, in many cases, leave their babies here so that they would be entitled to receive money from the Hongkong Government for their care. Dr York Chow Yat Ngok (), Hongkong's Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food, shot up to Beijing to ask for help about this matter. According to my usually reliable sources in Beijing, Dr York Chow Yat Ngok was given very short shrift and told to piss off, back to Hongkong, and to sort out his own problems. According to Mary Ng, my manicurist, whose brother is close to this situation, Dr York Chow Yat Ngok was told, in so many words, that Hongkong has its own government and it is up to Hongkong's Government to sort out its own little problems, especial in regard to minor matters. Also, petty officials in the employ of the Hongkong Government, as is Dr York Chow Yat Ngok, cannot rush up to Beijing every time there is a small little problem over this and that. The dressing down of Dr York Chow Yat Ngok amounted to what I have said to you before: If you have a dog, you don't do the barking.*

*Then, you have that hilarious situation over the abortive proposal for a Goods and Services Tax for Hongkong, as propounded by our Financial Secretary, Mr Henry Tang Ying Yen (). Hongkong was told, at first, that the tax base must be broadened and that a Goods and Services Tax was the answer, now that Hongkong could well afford it. Singapore was used as an example, initially, as to how that island republic had taken to its bosom, a 5-percent Goods and Services Tax, without any undo hardship on its population. Then, just before the ignominious back-tracking by the Hongkong Government, it was announced in Singapore that the 5-percent Goods and Services Tax would be increased to be a 7-percent Goods and Services Tax. Following that, Hongkong's population was told that, after all, perhaps this was not the best time to introduce the Hongkong version of a Goods and Services Tax. I am convinced that, if the Hongkong Government had forced such a tax upon the people of these 416 square miles, many of the population would have marched down the streets in protest. Is it any wonder that many people in Hongkong have lost faith in the Government of Mr Donald Tsang Yam Kuen?*

*Now, let's take a look at Macau and the way in which this little Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China is administered. The Government of Mr Edmund Ho Hau Wah () appears to be a no-nonsense administration and, when it is learnt that something is amiss, it takes very definitive action to correct the situation. I note that many, if not most, of the Portuguese remnants still stand in Macau: There is no great urgency to dismantle them. In Hongkong, on the other hand, one sees the remnants of its colonial history, being removed in somewhat of a hurry. The old Star Ferry and its clock tower are but one of the latest examples. For what reason would the Government of Hongkong want to discard, or destroy, the remnants of bygone days when a colonial power ruled the Hongkong roost? Say what you like about the British, but the British gave to Hongkong, a first-class postal system, a first-class legal system, a first-class sewage system, a first-class educational system, and a first-class, mass transit system, the last-mentioned,*

*being the envy of many countries of the world. The list of that which the British did for Hongkong is endless. And, not forgetting the fact that the British put into place the infrastructure that made Hongkong the idol of all of the world's proponents of the concept of a market society. Hongkong's Government was recognised, during the British rule, as an example of a free, entrepreneurial system of government, an entrepôt, if you will, whereby the market determined prices, with little to no interference by the government of the day. It was, in fact, a bastion of capitalism. Today, the Hongkong Government appears to be determined to remove and, perhaps, to expunge from the record books, all of the British past. For what reason? The way in which most people of Hongkong think, today, is due to the legacy of the British, in large part. Getting back to Macau, during the time that that little Chinese enclave was ruled by the Government of Portugal, it was much more corrupt than Hongkong ever was. But the artifacts of Colonial Portugal still stand and even the Portuguese language is still used, widely, with the present government, promoting the use of it. This colourful, picturesque, little 8.30 square-mile Special Administrative Region has its own individuality. It is luring people to visit it. The territory is metamorphosing into the Las Vegas of Asia. The speed at which things are moving in Macau suggest that it will overtake Hongkong as a mecca for entertainment. As long as the Macau population, of about half a million people, are able to earn a decent living, as long as they are able to have a roof over their heads, as long as they are able to send their children to decent schools, as long as they have a medical system that cares for their needs, and, as long as they continue to enjoy the freedoms that most people of the free world covet, there will be little trouble from this Chinese 'pimple' on its bottom. There is little requirement in Macau for people power to the extent that it is prevalent in Hongkong because the people, by and large, are happy with their lot. Not so in Hongkong, however. Is it possible, I ask you, that the Government of Mr Donald Tsang Yam Kuen has caused the hackles on the backs of a large segment of the population of Hongkong to rise up in anger?*

*What do you think?*

*Talk to you, next week.*

*Chief Lady*

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