

The Betty Letters

My Dear Grandchild,

*With the Palestinian territories in absolute shambles, with one major, political faction, fighting another, the Government of the Jewish State of Israel must be laughing very loudly. However, the sectarian fighting is, certainly, not a laughing matter. As I write this letter to you, it appears that Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and his Fatah Party is in some kind of control of the West Bank and he has sworn in an emergency cabinet to rule the country without any real legal authority because he has no mandate from the electorate so to do. Gaza Strip, on the other hand, is still under the control of Hamas, the rival political party to Fatah, the full name of which is *Ḥarakātu I-mujawamati I-'islāmiyya*, according to Bo-Bo, your grandfather, who is my lovable, froglike husband. The European Union and the United States have both promised financial aid to the 'illegal' government of that part of the Palestinian territories, under the control of Fatah; and, Israel is claiming that, perhaps, now, peace can be reached between the Jewish State and the Palestinians. Bo-Bo sniggered when I tried to talk to him about the situation. He reminded me that it was not that long ago that Israel was, as he put it, 'bombing and shelling the Hell out of the Palestinian territories'. Those were the days that Yasir Arafat was trying to rule the territory, of course, and he was put under virtual 'house arrest' by the Israeli Defense Force whose tanks surrounded his compound because, among other things, as President of his small fiefdom, Yasir Arafat did not make much of an attempt to stop Hamas from its numerous incursions into Israel where they killed and maimed the citizenry of that sovereign state. Yasir Arafat founded the commando corps, Al Fatah, in 1959, which was, originally, part of the Palestine Liberation Organisation. Today, Fatah, as it is commonly known, is, simply, a political party. Yasir Arafat, by the way, was the person who appointed Mahmoud Abbas as Prime Minister of the Palestinian territories, back in 2003. Yasir Arafat died in Paris, France, in 2004. In January 2006, Hamas was declared the winner of the elections for the Palestinian Legislative Council, obtaining nearly 43 percent of the votes and 76 seats out of the 132 seats. Hamas has never recognised the right of the State of Israel to exist and it never renounced its terroristic activities. Today, there is widespread fighting between the Hamas and Fatah political parties and it appears that Hamas will lose – if it has not, already – the support and trust of the Palestinian people because, in effect, it has broken its implied promises to the people who brought it to political power. This may sound odd to you, My Dear Grandchild, but Bo-Bo explained the situation to me, very clearly. (Men are good for some things, after all)*

According to Bo-Bo, who is something of a politician, you know, being in the in, in Beijing, Hamas and the Palestinian people entered into a kind of agreement as soon as Hamas became the ruling political party of the Palestinian territories. The agreement, inter alia, inculcated the concept that Hamas's subjects must obey the laws, laid down by Hamas. Bo-Bo made it very clear that while the sovereign, in this case, Hamas, is the beneficiary of the agreement with its people, it is not, necessarily, a party to the agreement. In short, the Palestinian people made a gift to Hamas of their submission to its will. Hamas, in turn, had an implied duty of fidelity, which included bringing peace to the Palestinian territories, to look after the well-being of its subjects, and, by so doing, bring happiness to the territory. However, as has happened of late, if Hamas allows the Palestinian territories to descend into lawlessness, then, the subjects of Hamas, in this case the Palestinian people, will seek to rescind their agreement with Hamas. Without a popular government,

anarchy must follow. President Mahmoud Abbas, clearly, realises the danger and has installed an emergency government of sorts, armed with promises of financial aid from the United States and the European Union. Nevertheless, this caretaker government of part of the Palestinian territories, one must realise, is, theoretically, illegal. Hamas knows this, also. Hamas has fallen from grace and it is, now, up to Fatah to enter into an agreement with the Palestinian people in order to allow the new stop-gap government to rule and to bring peace and happiness to the Palestinian people.

If you look carefully at the Government of China, you will note that, notwithstanding the Constitution of the People's Republic of China, a Constitution which embodies many democratic principles, China is, in fact, a dictatorship of sorts. Actually, the people have very little say in what their 'sovereign' determines, but, at the same time, the country is united, the country is at peace, and, by and large, the people enjoy a happy state of affairs. The country's economy is the envy of many a country of the Western and the Eastern world and, as the economy blooms, so the people benefit. So, the unwritten agreement that the people have with their 'sovereign' is valid and shall remain such just as long as the status quo is maintained, regardless of the type of government in power. A similar situation exists in Singapore where, in fact, there is, de facto, an authoritarian power, led by the family of Mr Lee Kuan Yew. Again, while Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, the son of Mr Lee Kuan Yew, claims that periodic general elections in Singapore are very democratic, his political party, The People's Action Party, having stayed in power for the past 48 years, with Mr Lee Kuan Yew, always, holding the post of Minister of this or that or, simply, being designated as 'Minister without Portfolio' or Senior Minister, it is obvious that the people of Singapore tolerate the situation because, once again, there is peace, prosperity and, perhaps, most important, happiness. It is clear, at this point, that democracy, that is the American and the European style, are not the only forms of successful governments in the world. Some people, it appears to me, like to be governed, dictatorially, provided that happiness, peace and prosperity are the end results of such a style of government. The idea of abrogation of responsibility is not repugnant to all peoples of the world if, at the same time, the 3 principles of life are the outcome of such a gift: Peace; prosperity; and, happiness.

Talk to you, next week.

Chief Lady

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